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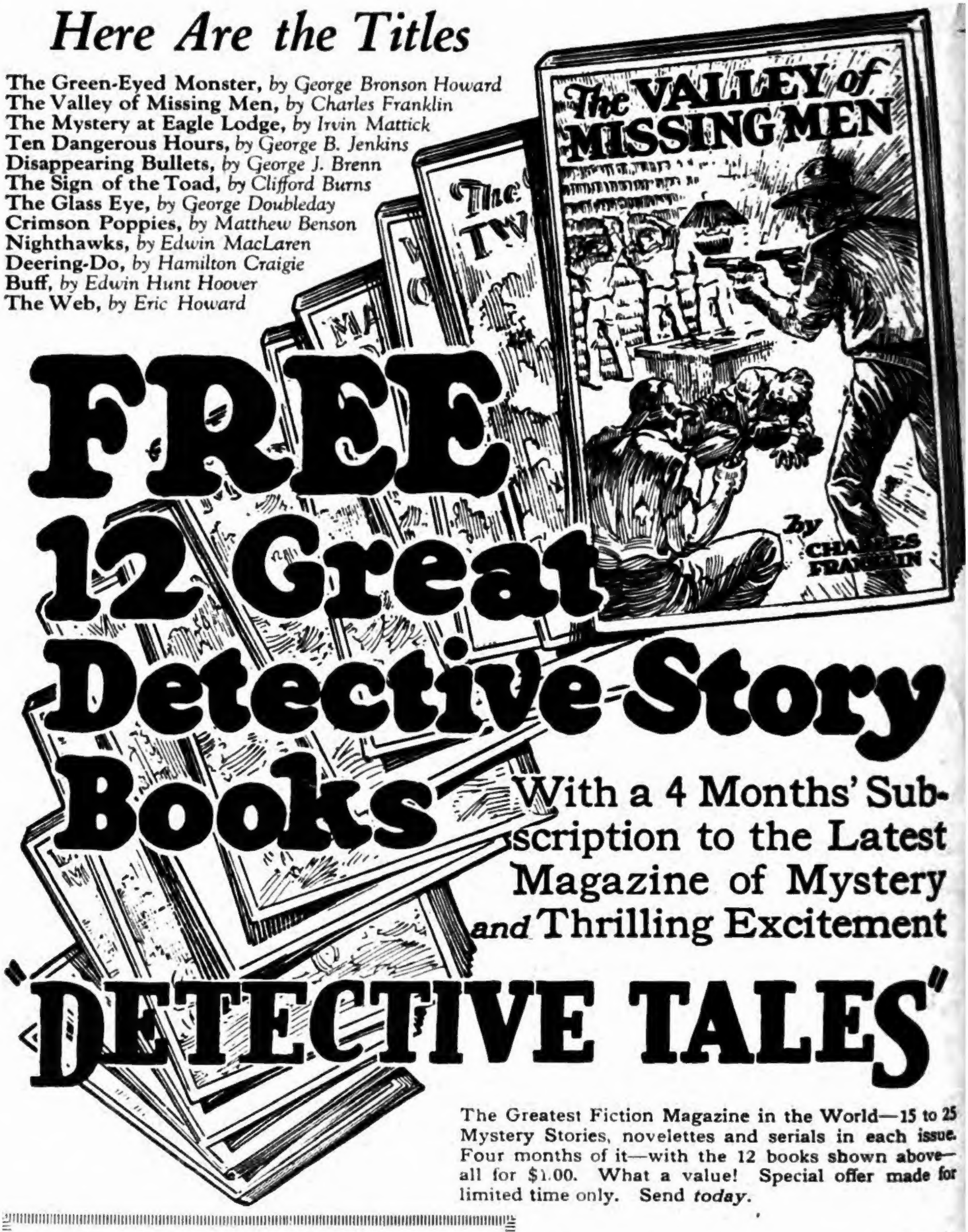

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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One Article, Three Complete Novelettes

READ this as actual history, for it is. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been signed, Russia was out of the World War, the Bolsheviki were in power and the 100,000 Czecho-Slovaks who renounced their allegiance to the Central Powers that they might fight in the Russian armies were left to beg for mercy from their enemies. There was an alternative: They could attempt a desperate march across 6,500 miles of hostile territory, eastward through Siberia to Vladivostok on the Pacific, in the hope of being transported thence to the western battle-front in France. The success of such a march would be without parallel in military history; its failure would mean annihilation. The Czecho-Slovaks accepted the risk—and won. "THE RETREAT OF THE HUNDRED THOUSAND," an article-novelette complete in the next issue, by Gerald B. Breitigam, who transcribes the experiences of those who went through this unique campaign.

WHEN *Tanoa* tendered his resignation to *Peter Illington*, the latter was only piqued—finding satisfactory servants in the Fijis was no easy matter. But the thing went further than domestic labor problems, and *Illington* was to find it out quickly. There was the Island for one thing, and for another—*Shimo Nessu*, the Japanese who whispered things to *King Tambau*. "THE SERVANT OF PETER ILLINGTON," an Off-the-Trail novelette,* by T. S. Stribling, in the next issue.

**See note at bottom of first contents page.*

CLARK, the missionary, was in disgrace; on the evidence of *Forbes*, his superior, he had been convicted of drinking—and worse—with the Japanese converts. A silent, inarticulate man, *Clark* accepted his punishment. Then, at an inn of ill-repute—where he was mistaken for a murderer—he again met *Forbes*. "THE INN OF THE SILKWORM-MOTH," a complete novelette in the next issue, by Sidney Herschel Small.

PETE HAILEY, with a family and a heavily mortgaged ranch, needed money—and needed it badly. That was why his brother *Job* decided upon the plan. For years *Job*, day-dreaming, had turned the scheme over in his mind—not that he had ever intended putting it into effect. And then the day finally arrived. "THIS BANDIT BUSINESS IS THE BUNK," a complete novelette of the West, by Frank Robertson, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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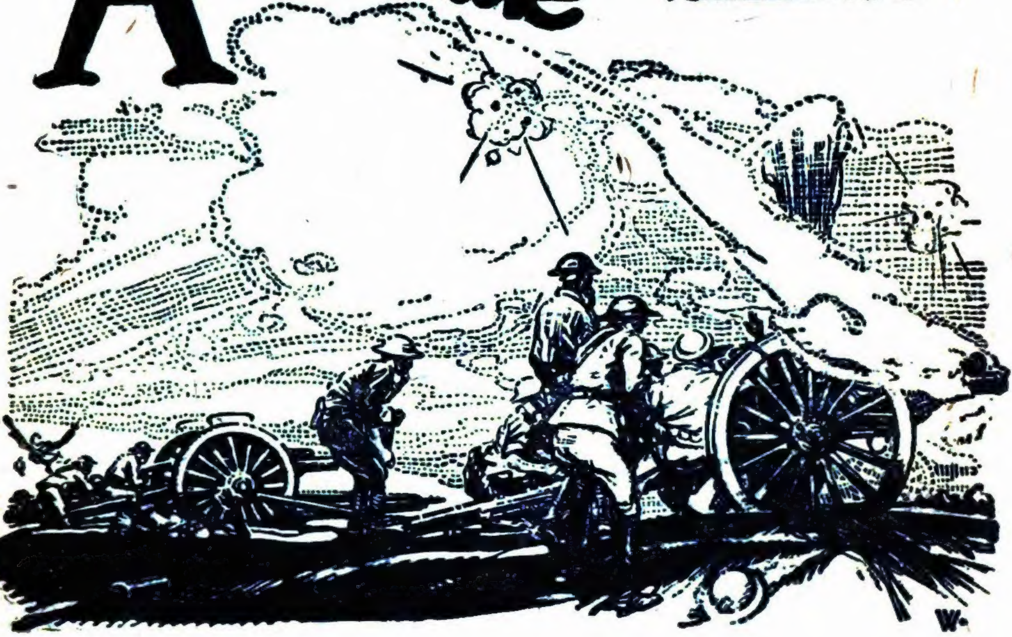

THE LUGER

A Complete Novelette by Leonard H. Nason

Author of "Pilgrim's Progress," "Breeches," etc.

A MISTY dawn and a sizzling, sozzling rain. A wheat field and some wet woods in the distance, and all about a growling mutter, and now and then a clang, as if some giant were sleeping on a tin roof, and tossing about and grumbling in his slumbers. A road ran off into the fog, and to the right of it, in the field, were four guns, with their open caissons beside them.

On the No. 1 seat of each piece was a sodden man, with his hands in his pockets and disgust on his face. Every so often he would take out one hand, pull the lanyard of the gun and relapse into his meditations once more. The battery was firing harassing fire; that is, they were shooting at some cross-roads in German territory, with the idea of disrupting traffic on said roads and of repaying Fritz for having kept the battery awake all night by desultory shelling.

The greater part of the gunners were in a ravine that lay at right angles to the road. There was a rolling kitchen there, cold and cheerless, with a little pool of rain on the top of the stove part, and two small wagons.

A large, rough-looking man approached the rolling kitchen and addressed another smaller, but just as dirty, man who leaned against the front part of the kitchen where they kept the lemon extract and the condensed milk and other delicacies that were issued for cooks and mess-sergeants only.

"What's chances for chow?" said the large man, who was the first sergeant, or top, of the battery.

The smaller man spat tobacco.

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"If you will tell me," said he, "how, in the name of all that is condemnable, I am going to make coffee with no coffee, and how I can get canned willie in the middle of a battlefield, I will do my best to get same. Also, I might inquire your reasons for sending my cook to watch where shells are going, in view of the fact that the outfit is full of bohunks, hunyaks, wops, Turks, crackers, ridge-runners and wheat-benders. Yonder, covered with a blanket that might be keeping some live man warm, is all that is left of a very fine cook, while all the hunyaks and so forth clamor for food."

"Listen t' me, yuh Donegal ditch-digger," said the first sergeant. "Yez have another cook, an' a kitchen detail av three men. In this sector is upwards of half a million men, French, Yanks and mongrels. They are not fed by the ravens. There must be food some'ers, where men wid five fingers on each hand can get hold av some av it. Now stick out your ears a minute longer. Yesterday mornin' we pulled out widout no breakfast. At the time av the noon meal we are on the march. There is no supper by reason av the slat wagon fallin' in the river. Look at thim"—pointing to where the men of the battery shivered under what shelter a tarpaulin or a limber could give—"d'yez want the job av tellin' thim there'll be no breakfast, an' you wid all night to get it ready in?"

"All night to get it ready. Didn't we get —— shelled out of us all night? Didn't you grab off my cook——"

"Niver mind, now, about your cook, or bein' kept awake. Whin a mess-sergeant can not sleep, he should go off an' buscar chow for the fightin' men av his outfit. If we have no chow in an hour's time, we'll dine off the mess-sergeant, now mind!"

The top went off to inspect the horses, and to see how many had succumbed to the effects of shell-fire, gas and old age. This last took quite a heavy toll, for the horses that the American forces got were those that the other Allies had rejected. If this arrangement was distasteful, the Americans were at liberty to provide their own.

In an angle of the ravine was a tent made of slickers and shelter halves, in which were three men. One of them was huge of frame, the second medium size, and the third was very, very small.

"I hope we don't move today," said the second man. "It'll be pretty wet layin' wire."

"Yes," said the long man, "and it'll be hot too. You notice there's lots more growl from them Jerries the last twelve hours. They run just about as far as they're goin' to, you wait and see. We'll probably run into a good big scrap one of these days. Then li'l' Joe'll get a chance to use that gun he's always cleanin'."

The third man, the small one, grinned, but made no reply. He was cleaning a revolver that had had most of the blueing rubbed off it by long continued polishing. He had black eyes and straight black hair like a horse's mane. An observer with a knowledge of such things would have said that there was a dash of Indian blood in him.

"What the —— is the matter with those —— cooks," complained the first speaker. "Do you realize we haven't had a meal since we got here?"

"Ferget it, Russell, we'll get somethin' after a while. The American army ain't goin' to starve to death."

"I don't know what will stop 'em, by ——, I don't!"

A fourth man crawled under the shelter, all in a rush, so that he jarred one of the supporting sticks loose and a stream of water cascaded down on Russell. There was a burst of language, which may be summarized, for the sake of decency, as an inquiry of the newcomer as to the whereabouts of the fire he was going to.

"I just come in off the line," the newcomer said, "and I was in kind of a hurry to get in out the wet. I'd like to catch some sleep. I been fixin' breaks all night. Lemme tell you things are in one awful jamb. We was outta touch with the doughboys all night, and no one knows where any one else is. We'll be getting an awful kick in the nose one of these days, believe me!"

He reached into his shirt.

"I got a souvenir, though. I was prowlin, round one of them German gun-pits, all wicker shell-cases an' holes in the ground' an' I found this."

He produced a German pistol, a little rusty, but still very serviceable. Little Joe was all attention at once, his eyes snapping and his hand extended.

"Lemme look at it, Ruby."

The other man handed it over and explained:

"It's got a rear sight on it, yuh see, an' all these little gimmicks an' wheels do somethin'. Then there's a stock goes with it so you can use it as a rifle. I don't know how it works, but I can puzzle it out."

Little Joe turned the gun over in his hand, keeping the muzzle always in the air, in case of accident, and showing in his small face much the same interest and desire that an art-lover does before a masterpiece.

Russell broke the spell.

"Be careful of that —— thing, it's liable to turn loose and ruin the whole lot of us."

Joe reluctantly returned the pistol to its owner, who put it back in his shirt and began to manufacture a cigaret, out of paper that had come in a hard-tack can. The shelter was small for the four of them, and Russell's looks at the new-comer, said so very plainly. This last seemed to care not at all.

"My dearest an' only wish," said he, "is to be able to smoke a good cigar. How about it, Perry?"

"I don't crave cigars none," said Perry, who was so long that his legs had to stick out in the rain because there was no room for them inside, "but I'd like to wrap myself around a nice big steak with onions and a bushel o' French fries. I could make a meal on that steak right now."

Russell peered out at the rain and the cold chow gun.

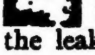
"If I could get hit through the flesh of my leg, or get enough gas to get by the doctor on, I'd never ask any more favors of anybody," said he.

There was a moment of silence.

"If you feels that way now, when you ain't been up more than since yesterday afternoon, how you goin' to feel when you been at it a week, like the rest of us?" asked Perry. "This is the eighth day we been in this scrap, an' let me tell you, boy, it's a he-man's scrap, but the other kind that's in it better not sound off none too loud, lessen they crave a whole lot of particular——"

"Everybody's remarked but you, Joe," said Ruby, to relieve the tension, "what would make you happy?"

"I aims," said Little Joe, "to git me one o' them Lugers."



CONVERSATION fell flat after that, three of them listening to the far-off shelling and trying to dodge the leaks in the roof, and the fourth merrily pursuing an elusive spot of rust in his gun barrel. A voice called from the far side of the ravine—

"Oh, Li'l' Joe, oh, Li'l' Joe, come over an' help us take this breech-block down."

The gunners were cleaning the pieces, and were evidently in difficulties. Joe put his gun carefully away and went out.

"What's that guy horning in with the telephone men for?" asked Russell. "He's a mechanic, isn't he?"

"He's a friend of mine," said the big man, as if that settled it. "His name's Mark Joseph, an' they calls him Little Joe."

"He's a queer little kid, ain't he," said Ruby. "Always cleanin' his gun, or helpin' some one clean theirs, or taking down a breech-block for some lazy gun crew. He's bugs over firearms; he'd be a non-com, if he wasn't so dumb."

"He ain't dumb," replied Perry. "He never went to school. He's one of them ridge-runners from Kentucky, and never had a chance to do anything but hunt all his life. His old man got into a shootin' scrape, an' had to hide out. Joe used to keep watch up in a tree while his old man tended the fields, so's some one wouldn't creep up on him an' plug a hole in him. That kid could shoot 'fore he could walk. He's scared to death some one'll laugh at him, that's the reason he never says nothin'. Him an' me was in the mill together down at Shelby, an' I wouldn't let the other prisoners pick on him. That's how come he sticks around me all the time."

"How'd he get in the army?"

"His old man died, an' he didn't have anywhere else to go."

"The guy that passed him must have been short-sighted. He's four inches under height, I'll bet."

"Aw, you know those birds. Anything that can walk an' stop a bullet gets by in war-time."

Conversation languished. Perry went out, and Ruby fell fast asleep where he sat against the bank. Russell looked out at the rain and cursed horribly because he had been fool enough to leave the horse-lines and go up to the front, instead of staying safely back of the lines. This was his second day up, and he was beginning to realize that war was a dirty, disagreeable, sleepless, hungry job, with an unclean death and a hasty burial as the most probable reward.

A fog swept down and gathered on

everything with a wet clamminess and a most disagreeable chill.

"Everybody wear their sidearms," called the captain from somewhere in the mist. "Hurry up with those guns; get 'em cleaned up and prepare for direct fire." With all touch lost with everybody, enemy and friend, it would be well to make preparations for a counter-attack. There was no answering thrill of excitement from the men at these orders. They had no desire to fight off a crowd of rough Huns, with pistols. They crouched silently under what shelter they could find and thought hopelessly of the chances of getting a good wound. The word was around that due to a shortage of food there would be no breakfast.

THE tall man, Perry, walked down the ravine to a covered cart, a piece of rolling material called a *fourgon* where the telephone detail kept its wire and instruments. He waved his hand to Joe as he went by the guns. Perry was in charge of the detail, and Russell and Wrublofski, yclept Ruby, were wire-stringers. Under the wagon were two more telephone men, kids too young to have a beard, as their smooth cheeks testified, and a third man older than the other two, and fat. None of the three heard Perry's approach.

"Tell me, dice, who takes the shells out the caisson? Not five, dice, not five. What's three f'm seven dice? Add'n' subtract, dice! What's three f'm seven?"

A seven rolled upward on the blanket.

"You confuses them dice," said the fat man, "hollerin' seven at 'em all the time. Shoot the twenty."

"I'm clean," said one of the kids sadly.

"So'm I," said the other.

"Well, here's some more jack," and the fat man handed them each twenty matches.

"Come outta that," said Perry. "Get the —— back to the horses where you belong. No one rolls bones under this cart but telephone men."

The fat man crawled out.

"Needn't be so hard-boiled about it," he muttered.

"Shut up," said Perry, "or I'll box your ears."

The fat man went away.

"I told you kids not to shoot any more 'jaw-bones' with that bird. You'll never draw any pay if you don't quit. Hop in the cart, now, and lug out some of that wire. How many shovels we got? We're liable to have to dig a dugout if we move up today."

Little Joe came down from where he had been working on the guns.

"Perry," said he, "there's a old gun position down the road a piece. Le's you an' me snoop round there a bit. I hones for one o' them German pistols."

"The Old Man will have a rush o' blood to the head if he sees us go," replied Perry. "Well, I ain't got much to do here, that's a cinch!" He scratched his head a minute. "Well, come on, he won't any more than hang us."

The two sneaked off into the fog and came out on the road down-hill from the battery, where Joe led the way to where many wheel-tracks turned into the underbush. Just far enough back in the bushes so that the place was well-screened were four shallow pits, where the Germans had had a battery. The ground was scarred with newly made shell-holes, so close that many of them opened into each other. There were stacks and stacks of ammunition, all in wicker cases, some of it exploded, for the shells lay scattered and blackened as if by fire. It was an eerie place in the fog, for these two artillerymen could read the story in the mangled ground and the blackened undergrowth.

"Man, oh man! I'll bet it was warm here," exclaimed Perry. "Look at them shell-holes. Can yuh imagine 'em workin' the guns, and us beltin' em for all we were worth, an' the ammunition blowin' up and every one gettin' killed and them still stickin' to it just the same? Well, I'll hand it to 'em. They got their guns away, too, before we got over here."

Little Joe prowled a while, kicking over the wicker cases and exploring some shallow dugouts that had been the post of command and the telephone station, but found nothing but an old boot and the remains of a blouse, all bloody and torn. The men that had manned that battery had fought their fight and got away, what was left of them, and left no trace but the pits and the shell-holes and the ammunition to tell that they had been there.

There was a hail from the road, at which both men jumped.

"Waddya want?" cried Perry.

"Is there any doughboy outfit around here? We got a load o' rations for the Umpth Infantry."

Rations? The two artillerymen looked at each other.

"Joe," said Perry. "You run like —— up to the battery an' tell 'em I'm bringing a load of chow up for them."

Joe fled, and Perry went down to the road.

"I heard some one scramblin round up here," said the driver of the cart, "and I thought it might be the outfit I was lookin' for."

"I'll show you where you can leave that chow," said Perry, "come on with me." He started up the road, the cart following him.

Little Joe tore into the ravine like a small whirlwind.

"Scatter round," he hollered. "Look wild there! Chow! Chow! Chow!"

Though he was almost incoherent from lack of breath, he finally made himself understood. Never did hornets hustle from their nests with half the eagerness that that battery left tarpaulin and limber and rushed up to the road. The captain lay under one of the two *fourgons*, trying to snatch a little sleep. He heard the commotion and the word, "Chow" many times repeated. He had an idea that something exciting was about to happen, but being a wise officer he decided that it could happen without him.

The ration cart stopped suddenly, by reason of many hands seizing the reins. Perry faded into the fog.

"What's coming off here?" cried the driver. Before he could utter another word the man on the seat with him cried:

"Hey! Get t'—— away from that beef!"

A hind quarter of beef was sliding over the tail-gate, as if it had suddenly come to life again. Before the driver could utter a word it was gone. He leaped off the wagon, to find himself walled in by a great number of stony-eyed men.

"Where's the fire?" they calmly asked him.

The driver's companion clambered into the back of the wagon, cursing excitedly, and reaching for his gun. At once the cart swarmed with men. There was the sound of bleating from their midst, and shortly a soldier came flying through the air accompanied by sacks of potatoes and cans of corned Bill. His feet struck the ground and his jaw collided with a hard fist at the same moment.

"Would yez attack a non-commissioned officer?" said the top sternly, and drew back his fist for another sock, but the soldier had fled.

The horse, startled by many slaps and kicks, departed up the road into the fog at a gallop, the empty cart swaying from side to side.

"Go get your horse," said the stony-eyed men, and the poor driver had no recourse but to obey, swearing in a manner to raise the hair, and promising them all a visit from the military police.

The captain poked his head from under the fourgon.

"What's the matter, sergeant," he asked the top.

"We just had some rations left us," said the first sergeant, with open and honest countenance.

"Good," said the captain. "Get them cooked before that man's officers get back here."

A hind quarter of beef! Steaks for every one in the outfit! Potatoes!

"Turn out, guys, every one bear down on peelin' spuds, an' we'll have French fries!" The chow gun was stoked until flame poured from the chimney. The meat was cut up as if by a machine. Every one began to peel spuds—they were very wet, so that they needed no soaking—and happiness reigned. Into this bustling scene arrived the driver of the chow cart with an excited lieutenant,

"Who's in command here?" he cried.

"I am," said the executive officer of the battery. "What can I do for you?"

"You thieves stole the rations for a whole company," said the excited one, "and I'm going to have them back. What do you mean by robbing my driver? My men haven't had any food for two days. Where is it? Give it back immediately! By ——, you can't get away with that."

The exec. was very sympathetic.

"What makes you think we took your chow?"

The lieutenant turned to his companion.

"Wasn't this the outfit that held you up?"

"Yes, sir, an' that big guy grabbed the horse."

"What big guy?"

The lieutenant looked in the indicated direction, but could see no one. The big guy had faded behind the *fourgon*. From under the *fourgon* protruded a pair of boots, with chains across the instep. The lieutenant guessed—and rightly—that they belonged to the battery commander, who was keeping himself clear of entanglements by putting it up to the exec. either to return the stolen chow or send the looey away satisfied.

There was a smell of frying meat in the air, and a great amount of spud peelings about. Also, there were some hundred armed men, red-eyed and bearded, who looked as if they would cut an officer's throat for the mere joy of doing so.

"There's one of our boxes!"

The driver pointed to a box of canned hash that was on the step of a caisson. Some one had hung a slicker over it, but the slicker had fallen off.

"Let's look at it," said the exec. and he and the lieutenant went toward the lower end of the ravine to inspect the box.

The driver stayed where he was. The artillerymen came down and gathered around him, silently, ominously. They shut him off entirely from the sight of the officer. He looked around apprehensively and started to move away. A foot rebounded from him. A path opened before him, pointing away from his officer and toward the road. A rough, hard hand seized his collar and shook him back and forth till his eyes hung out. A calloused finger pointed and a calloused voice said—

"Git!"

He got.

The two lieutenants came back from an inspection of the box. It was canned hash, an article of issue through the Army, and bore no distinguishing mark. The principal witness was gone.

"He thought he saw a place down the road where there were some guys that took his chow," explained one of the artillerymen.

The poor infantry officer allowed that he must have made a mistake and departed sadly to find the driver of the ravished ration cart.

The steak continued to broil, and the potatoes to sizzle in the deep bacon fat. The battery peeled and peeled, and as fast as a pan full was done, off the stove it went and a fresh one was put on. Joy was upon these men. Wet they were, to their very vitals, and sleepless, and their nerves all humming from the shell-fire of the night before, but they could inhale the odor of broiling meat, and see the spuds bubbling in their greasy bath, and forget all their troubles.

TWO riders turned off the road and came down into the ravine. A haggard, white-faced officer and liaison agent from the battalion. The officer spoke to the captain without dismounting, handed him some papers, and rode off. The Old Man called for the first sergeant.

"How's the battle, guy?" the battery asked the liaison man.

"Battle, ——!" said he. "This ain't no battle; this here is a race. The doughboys run through them woods all night long, and never seen a boche. There ain't none; they're all gone."

"We heard that old oil before, when we was across the river. There wasn't no Huns nowhere around. There was just about enough to knock the —— outta the French army, and put a crimp in this division it'll never get over."

There came a bellow from the first sergeant.

"Driver-r-r-s! Harness up! Cannoneerr-r-r-s! March Order-r-r-r! Snap into it, jump!"

The battery froze, and then began to move hither and yon, like a chorus in a musical comedy, after the star has finished her song. That they must move up, perhaps to support an attack, and that for many of them it would be their last fight made not the slightest impression upon them. They had been ordered to hook up and pull out, and there would be no time for chow. The end of the world would seem a lesser disaster.

"Put up the chow," ordered the captain. "We'll have it tonight. We haven't got far to go, and we'll have all the better appetite."

So the battery pulled out, the men reeling and staggering along beside the wretched horses, holding on to limber and caisson to keep erect, and stamping their feet to stay awake. To be starved, to be kept from sleep, to be forced to walk and walk when sensation had left one's legs—to be tortured with shot and shell, machine-gun and bomb, and to die miserably at the last, is a hard fate. But the man that goes through it and lives, and then has to go home to find himself a job, and see how useless it all is in the end, sometimes envies the man who dies.

Mark the devious workings of destiny! The infantry that the battery was moving up to support was the same outfit from whom the chow had been stolen earlier in the day. The doughboys were to be in position at four, ready to jump off. The guns were to come in shortly after, go into abbatage and put over a rolling barrage. Then the infantry were to clear the heights of any boche that might be left alive. All this before dark.

During the night, the hills that command the road having been cleared, the heavy artilley would move up, field hospitals would cross the river and be set up, divisional and corps headquarters would advance, and everything would be ready for the forward movement at daylight.

The infantry had left their packs and were sitting awaiting the final dispositions before the attack. Auto riflemen here, one-pounders up the road a way, a few machine-guns on the flank. There were some scouts and a patrol or two out, trying to get in touch with the enemy. The doughboys thought of their empty stomachs and cursed the artillery, for the story of the raid on the ration cart had gotten around.

A plane buzzed from nowhere, flying with the swiftness of a hornet. It ducked at the road and let fly at the men sitting there. They scattered, naturally, while their own machine-guns replied to the airman's fire. The rattle of guns seemed overloud. Men discovered that they were under hostile fire from the ground as well as from the air. Rum-jars began to fall, shells clanged, the —— was to pay generally.

The Yanks, scattered and disorganized by the airplane, took cover wherever they could and tried to dope out where the fire was coming from. Since it was coming from three sides at once, this was a tough job. Gradually, without knowing it, they began to give ground. A swift duck to a better tree, a shell-hole that offered good shelter, thicker brush that would give cover from the plane that was still circling like a buzzard.

Then the enemy rushed them. Hooting, yelling, hurling potato-masher bombs, nearly a thousand big Huns fell upon the infantry, stabbed some, shot some more and took a lot more prisoner.

After that, what was left of the Yanks fell back to a ravine on the right flank to reorganize. The machine-gun fire stopped with a suddenness that spoke of iron discipline. Peace descended as if the whole thing had been a scene from some play, and the curtain had just been lowered. What had happened was that the airplane had seen the artillery, a whole battalion of it, twelve guns, coming up the road, and had signaled the enemy troops on the ground, who immediately made preparation for the proper reception of the new-comers.

Down in the ravine where the infantry were binding up their wounds, a sergeant approached an officer who sat with his head in his hands, cursing the fate that had made him the sole commissioned survivor of the battalion.

"Sir," said the sergeant, "hadn't we better send some one to warn the artillery that there's no one in front of them?"

"Don't bother me!" said the officer. "—— the artillery. Let 'em find out for themselves. They're all full of our food, may be they can hold those Huns."

This officer was the same that had searched for his stolen chow at the battery position earlier in the day, so perhaps his rancor was somewhat justified. Moreover, he was not quite himself, and any one who has been policed by Fritz will understand and sympathize with him.

NOW what follows was not a battle, nor even a counter attack. It was a local action, between a battalion of artillery and an undetermined number of Germans, probably not very great. Next morning, back at headquarters, the chief of division said to a chief of brigade—

"What does this dimple in the line in front of your sector mean?"

"Oh, that! Why, one of my regiments ran into a little hard luck last night, that's all," the chief of brigade replied.

Here now is what a little hard luck is like.

The road up which the artillery was advancing ran along the base of the hills that bordered the Marne, and then turned north and wound its way up a ravine, skirted the base of a hillock, turned west and then north again, going over the hill. It was this second hill that the infantry were to have cleared. The artillery were to take position on the north slope of the hillock, two batteries in the field and one in the road. The hillock connected with a short ridge that ran east and west. There were woods to the west of the road and along the ridge, but none on the hillock. The second hill was bare, except for the standing wheat and a great block of a farm at the top.

The artillery came peacefully along the road, crawling out from the houses of a town like a snake from its hole. The town was full of infantry waiting for some one to tell them where to go, and rolling kitchens and wagons of one kind or another that had lost their outfits. After the guns came the telephone *fourgon*, with Perry and his wire-stringers, and little Joe, following it. They noticed that there seemed to be an unusual number of walking wounded about, and the farther they went the more of the backwash of battle they saw.

"They look as if they'd been having a real fight," remarked Russel.

"Hey, guy," called Perry to a passing group of doughboys, all mud and with their clothes in rags. "How's it comin' up there?"

"Rotten!" they answered in chorus.

"That there guy's got one of them new automatic rifles," said Little Joe. "I wisht I could fall out an' look at it."

"Better not," Perry advised. "Yuh might get yourself in a jam."

Little Joe sighed and marched on, looking back regretfully over his shoulder.

There was a horrible stench of carrion that grew stronger as the battery advanced. As the column rounded a curve the source of the smell came into view. There was a German battery in a clump of pines, all blasted and torn by shell-fire. Corpses, blackened by the sun, were piled in heaps around the guns, and the torso of a man hung in one of the trees.

"I suppose they were to cover the men putting the pontoons together," said Perry, "and got caught by the counter barrage. Hot dog! Smell the sauerkraut!"

Joe marked the spot in his mind. He meant to come down there sometime, smell or no smell, and examine the breech mechanism of the German guns, and see if there were any Lugers lying around loose.

The guns turned the corner at the foot of the hillock, and the leading battery swung off the road.

A lieutenant rode up from the rear of the column.

"Do you see any signs of the infantry?" he asked.

"No," replied the captain, "but they must be in the wheat somewhere."

"Are you sure this is the place?"

The captain compared his map with some of the prominent features of the landscape.

"This is the place all right," said he, "So let's unlimber and get into action. We ought to fire in fifteen minutes."

The troops unlimbered, B battery on the left of the line, A battery—Little Joe's—next, and C battery in the road.

The sergeants set up their goniometers and began to line up the guns; the cannoneers started to dig holes for the trail spades. Most of the limbers got away quickly and were taken around back of the little hill, where the wagons had been left.

At the guns all was in readiness, C battery had even got away one shot. Midway between the guns and the top of the hillock, Little Joe sat on his heels wondering if he would be able to inspect the German battery the next day. Perry was laying a line from the guns to where the post of command would be, on the far side of the hill. Ruby and Russel were preparing to start off to the battalion P. C. with another line. The captain and the first sergeant had their heads together over a map.

Across the road, in the wheat field, came a tapping like an orchestra leader, rapping for attention. Every head went up. Then, like the opening chord of an overture, a clattering roar that stopped the blood in one's veins. The first sergeant and the captain rushed up the hill without a word.

The top seized the captain and jerked him to one side as a limber galloped by, its horses riderless and one of the swinging team down and dragging. They took one look at the battalion.

"Lie down, sorr," said the first sergeant, his brogue becoming thicker as his agitation increased. " 'Twill do the lads no good to get yourself kilted now. 'Twas all done in a minute. They niver knew phwat hit thim."

He led the captain back down the slope, where there were some pallid soldiers gathered, telephone men, a few drivers, and one or two gunners that had been away from their guns when the firing started.

At the first rattle, Little Joe went to cover behind a rock. He watched the gunners swept from their seats as if with a broom; he saw others who had not been hit at the first fire run back up the hill, and watched them shot down like rabbits as they ran. The gunner of the first piece leaned his head down on the breech, as if he was tired, then very, very, slowly, slipped from his seat and disappeared in the grass under the trail. The body of the executive officer hung over the shield of the second piece, where he had been lining up the sights.

Joe looked around the other side of his rock to see if there was anything in sight to shoot at, but there was nothing but a slight haze that had risen from the wheat.

After a time the fire slackened a little, and the men looked questioningly at the captain.

"There's nothing we can do," he said loudly, "but wait until it gets dark, and then perhaps we may think of something to try."

He looked rather white about the lips, for he was filled with a burning rage. Some one was responsible for this thing; there was a mistake somewhere, but it was not his, he was sure of that.

"Those Huns must be right across the road from us. Every one keep his side-arms handy, in case they rush us."

"It won't get dark," said the top. "There's a full moon."

Little Joe suddenly appeared among them.

"Did you see what happened?" said the Old Man.

"Yes, sir," said Joe. "That there wheat is full of Jerries, an' they done shot up all the battery."

His voice shook a little, for, though he had seen men killed in his day, and perhaps accounted for one or two himself, the sudden destruction of an entire battery in the space of a few minutes had unnerved him. And then he was but a boy, after all.

"Do you think any got away?"

Joe shook his head, and the captain looked off up the valley, where he could see the smoke from some German ration dumps burning.

"They must be still going," said he, "or they wouldn't be burning their supplies."

"I wish they'd stop shootin'," muttered Joe. "They'll ruin every sight in the battery."

So then they sat there, in the gathering dusk, and thought of the disaster that had overtaken them, and wondered if any of the gunners were still alive, and how long it would take Fritz to exterminate the whole battalion at the rate he was going.

THE position of the survivors was perilous in the extreme. They were on the reverse slope of the hill, which protected them from machine-gun fire, but not from the desultory shelling that was being kept up by the boche artillery. Very probably it was one lone piece that was doing it all, but its crew made the most of their opportunity and scattered their shells all up and down both sides of the hill, so that it seemed as if several batteries were firing.

The shells sounded much like a roller coaster, a long slow rumble as of a car going up an incline, a pause at the summit, then a shrieking rush down the slope, ending with a tremendous *whang!*

"——! Where did that one go?"

Then plaintive cries:

"First aid! First aid!"

Then the men would crane their necks.

"Who is it? Who is it?" they whispered. And the question that all of them had in their hearts was——

"Who's next?"

S-rooosh wang! Every one cast himself to earth.

"Over in the trees," said the Old Man, spitting out a mouthful of grass he had bitten off in order that he might get closer to the ground.

"Hear any one holler?"

They all listened. No sound. Then two men appeared in the growing dusk carrying a third.

"It's Perry," said they, simply, and laid him where the telephone men crouched by their coils of wire.

A hospital corps man appeared and began to cut away the wounded man's breeches. The rest looked on with tight lips, then gazed into space as the ripping knife laid bare a hip from which the muscles hung in a great flap. The first-aid man pointed silently and began to unroll a bandage.

"You'll have a black and blue spot on your leg tomorrow," said he to the wounded man. "This ain't hardly enough to waste puttin' iodin on."

"I'm gettin' awful weak, fellers," said Perry.

No one answered him. Little Joe began to weep. The first aid man reached around and felt under Perry's blouse a moment, then rolled up his bandage and put it back in the pouch again.

"He's gone," he said.

There was no sound but Little Joe's sobbing.

The captain came suddenly to life.

"Well, get him out of here! What the —— do you mean by letting him die here? And you two idiots—" turning to the two that had brought the wounded man in—"Haven't you any more brains than to bring a man down here when he's all blown to bits and this outfit ready to take foot in hand and go clean to —— into Spain any minute? What are the rest of you sitting around with your thumb in your mouth for? D'yuh know there's a war on? Up on to your feet and do a little work! You three men, down to the *fourgon* and get all the picks and shovels there are there. Bring 'em up here! Wrublofski and Russell! Telephone men, you call yourselves, and you haven't laid a foot of wire since we got here. How d'you think I'm going to talk to the battalion? With a megaphone? On your way! Lay the wire straight out along the ridge for about five hundred yards, and then turn square and go down the side. The battalion P. C. is in the big white house as you enter the town. If I don't get into communication in fifteen minutes I'll have your hides nailed to a tree."

WRUBLOFSKI and Russell picked up their coil of wire and started off unrolling it slowly. They kept well under the edge of the ridge and crawled along as silently as they might.

"I wonder if Perry knew he was dying?" said Russell finally.

"I guess not," answered Ruby. "He never said nothin' about angels or anything like that the way guys are supposed to when they're kickin' off. He just felt weak and he was dead."

"I never saw any one die before," said Russell.

"Well, you don't need to cry about it, you'll see plenty more of 'em before morning."

"—— you, don't you laugh at me, or I'll knock your can off."

"All right, now, we come out here to lay wire, an' not to fight, an' the quicker we get it done, the quicker you an' me gets into the cellar. Let's go."

It was by now quite dark, but the moon made objects seen almost as easily as if it were yet day.

The two crept slowly along, for wire takes a long time to lay, especially if one has to duck every other minute to dodge a shell. By the time they got into the trees, the shells came less frequently. Jerry could probably see that there were men in the open space on the hill, and he'd naturally pay them the most attention. He did not forget, however, that there might be men in the woods.

"Let's get our breath a minute," said Ruby. "This wire is breakin' the arm off me."

"Why the —— we can't use wire like the Frogs do, I can't see," said Russell, dropping the coil he was carrying. "Those birds can carry a mile or so of it in their pocket. We ought to have a truck to do this work."

The French used very thin wire for communication work, hardly thicker than thread, while the Americans used heavy insulated cable. The reason was that the French had prepared for war in time of peace, and that the Americans had not, so they were forced to use what they had, and the poor soldier suffered, not the cheeseparing congressman nor the ranting pacifist who was responsible.

Russell took off his tin hat and sat on it.

"Your putt string is untied," said he.

Ruby leaned over to bind up the tape of his puttee. *Bang! Swish!* A thin patter of falling leaves and twigs. Ruby hugged the ground and tried to flatten himself as much as possible. He knew his time had come. Shrapnel had made that tremendous bang, and the swish was a bucketful of leaden balls hunting eagerly for some Yank among whom they might distribute themselves.

A man had not much to fear from high explosive shell if he lay down on the ground and kept his nerve, because his chances on being struck by anything but a direct hit were small, but he that was under shrapnel fire, and had no overhead cover, such a one had the chance of a celluloid supply sergeant in Hades.

One shell, that was all. Just a reminder to whomever might be in those woods that the Imperial German Army was on the job. When it appeared that there were to be no more aerial firecrackers Ruby arose and pulled his gas mask back into place from where it had lodged under his right arm during his flattening efforts.

"I hope we don't get no more of them, Russ," said he.

Then his heart turned to a lump of ice. The other man was lying on his back, under a little bush, and his white face stared silently up at Ruby.

"Did they getcha, old feller?" cried the telephone man.

No need to drop to his knees, no need tc feel under Russ' blouse for heart beats, the other man was dead. Tin hats were made to wear and not to sit on.

Ruby began to run back along the wire, sobbing silently to himself. He had no thought but to get away from that thing under the bush.

"They got him and never touched me," he kept repeating to himself while he stumbled along.

The double shock of having a comrade killed by one's side and of escaping death by an inch oneself has upset steadier minds than that poor wire-stringer's.

Suddenly he stopped. He had been sent to lay wire, and he was quitting on the job. That wire had to be laid. There were men on that hillside whose lives depended on him. Then, though his mind shrank at the thought of those lonely woods, and of being wounded and left to die miserably out there alone under the trees, he turned back and, picking up the coil, slung it over his shoulder and went on, stringing it behind him.

The wire caught on tree-roots and under bushes. It tangled itself and snarled itself and got under Ruby's feet and tripped him, so that what with the labor of stringing the wire and carrying the coil unassisted, and the horror of those woods and the terror of sudden death that was upon him, he is hardly to be blamed for not noticing that the moon was no longer visible except when he turned around to clear the wire from some place where it had caught on the ground.

"Ain't I never goin' to get out o' these woods," he muttered, wiping the sweat out of his eyes.

Before him was an opening in the woods, perhaps ten yards across, piled with faggots that the French had cut for their Winter fuel and left to dry. The fire-places for which those twigs had been gathered were buried under heaps of shattered masonry now, or ground into powder by shell-fire. The soldier hurried across the clearing, the coil getting lighter, as he laid more and more wire. Some men stepped out from behind a pile of faggots.

"Hey, guys," he called, "How far's the town—*arrgh*, you Dutch ——!"

His hand leaped to his gun but the flap caught on the button so that he could not draw the weapon. The men leaped on him and gathered him to their bosoms. Confused, shaken to his heart's core by Russell's death, he had turned down the wrong slope and laid the wire right into the German lines.

BACK where the survivors of the battery were digging in, the machine-gun fire and light shelling had ceased. In their place was a methodical bombardment of the Marne with freight cars, motor-trucks, stationary boilers, steam-rollers and other hardware. The first one started way, way, back, sounding like the beginning of a skyrocket cheer at a football game, clattered by overhead and fell into the river with a glorious roar. "——!" said the captain. "What was that?"

"'Twas a whole train, kettle, rattlers and buggy, that Fritz was after throwin' in the Marne," said the top. "'Tis the pontoons he's huntin' for."

Another column of water leaped to the heavens, a little farther down the stream, and the watchers involuntarily ducked as if they feared they might get wet, for all that the river was a mile below them. The hole-digging was suspended while the new form of shredded death was observed.

The enemy was firing by map. That is, he had no idea of where the pontoon bridges were, so that he shelled up and down the course of the river, like some giant walking along the center of the stream, pounding down his feet at every step with an enormous splash. Clear down around the bend the bursts went, then turned and came majestically up-river again, a bellowing roar that echoed all up and down the valley, the sudden tower of water, glittering in the moon, scarce falling back before another leaped up a few hundred yards up the stream.

The artillerymen looked on with small enjoyment. One of those things might fall short, to the utter destruction and eradication of the hill on which they were sitting.

"Perhaps," began the captain in a loud voice, "if we had one of those guns on this side of the hill, we might be able to do something with it. Joseph, duck down to the *fourgon* and bring up the picket line. Get some of the drivers to help you bring it back here. Now—" after Little Joe had departed— "I'd like a non-commissioned officer and two or three men to volunteer to go over the hill and hook that rope on to one of the guns. Then we'll pull it over here where we want it."

At once each of his hearers tried to be the first one to say nothing. Some shivered ever so slightly, for the night was growing cold. There was a long silence.

"The non-com that goes will get the D. S. C." said the captain. He looked around. One of the observation detail feigned sleep. Two other non-coms regarded the moon. The instrument sergeant swallowed hard.

"Yuh needn't look at me," quoth he. "I wouldn't go over that hill for medals enough to sink the *Leviathan*."

Little Joe and some others arrived with the picket line. Then up and spake a corporal named Britton.

"I'll go, Captain," said he.

With him went a little Jew named Marks, and a man named Culp, from Georgia, who could neither read nor write, and probably had no idea what he was doing. There were also two men from C battery, whose names no one knew. They crawled cautiously up the slope dragging the rope after them and disappeared over the edge.

The rope continued to run out, like a great snake. The men watched it with a horrified feeling about their hearts. When it stopped for a moment, they held their breath. They tried to figure how far the volunteers had gone from the amount of rope that had run out, but no one remembered the original size of the coil.

Plop! A flare hung like an arc-light, just visible over the hill. It had been fired to light the opposite slope. There was a sudden wild hammering of guns. A second flare went up. The firing became intermittent, finally ceased. Eagerly every eye went to the rope. It lay motionless. The men listened to the pounding of their hearts and silently prayed that that thing of hemp might move.

It took on, for the moment, a living personality. They wanted to fall on it with their fists, to kick and bite it into some signs of life, to make it wriggle once more up the hill and into the blackness on the other side. It made no movement.

"Git on wid that diggin'," said the top fiercely. "Let's have somewheres to go whin they start shellin' again."

A voice spoke from somewhere.

"Well, Britton's folks will be proud of his D. S. C. anyway."

"Pull back that rope," said the captain, "and get it out of sight."

A shell burst in the river with a new sound, a crunching snarl. Faint, far-off shouting, and many black specks bobbing in the water.

"I guess they got a bridge," said some one.

The men sat silently, each busy with his own thoughts, each one feeling that he would never see the light of day again.

"Can you get any one on that telephone?" the captain asked after a while.

One of the men went over to where the instrument was propped against a small tree. He ground at the crank and then listened at the receiver.

"The wires are dead," he said.

"They've been gone a long time," said the captain to himself. "I wonder if they got through. Here, Joseph," he called, "follow up this wire, and see what happened to those two men that were supposed to lay it. If the wire isn't in to the battalion, go on and tell the major how things are going up here. And then come back. Understand? Come back here. That cellar is probably full, anyway."

Little Joe drew his revolver and put it between the buttons of his blouse, back of his gas mask, where he could get it in a hurry. He picked up the wire and followed it quite easily, walking along and letting it run through his hand. The moonlight filtered through the trees in a shivery manner that gave an unearthly appearance to every clump of bushes or tree trunk that its rays fell upon. The ordinary soldier would have died fifty deaths and been taken a prisoner ten times for every twenty yards he went, alone in those moonlit woods, but Joe was a hunter, and the woods at night held no terrors for him.

THE wire began to work gradually up hill, so that Joe had to go more cautiously. He stumbled over Russell's body. The bush shaded it now, so that Joe could not see the face.

"Where is you-all hit?" he whispered.

There was no answer. A tug at the wire

showed that it ran some distance beyond the body, so it was clear that one of the men had kept on. Joe bent down for a closer look, and in doing so touched the other's hand.

"He's dead," he muttered to himself, "dead an' cold. I 'spec' somethin's happened to Ruby, too."

He picked up the wire and began to follow it again, but not walking as he had before. He flitted from dark spot to dark spot like a shadow, silently, carefully, as if he were stalking game in his native mountains. Now and again he would stop to listen, but he heard no sound other than the falling of the shells in the Marne, and distant firing where the infantry were fighting on the right and left.

The wire no longer ran evenly, but in curves and loops and great zigzags. When Joe came to the place where Ruby had turned the wrong way, he squatted on his heels and thought deeply for a long while.

"Mebbe," said he, "I can get me a Luger out of this."

Then he took his revolver from his blouse and began to follow the wire again, a foot at a time, very slowly, straining his ears for some sound that would give him warning of the enemy.

The guns of the battery were on the north slope of a hill that ran east and west. The main German force was on the opposite slope, the machine-guns echeloned all the way up so that each gun commanded the one in front. On the crest of the second hill was the German field-gun where the gunners could employ direct fire; that is, they could see what they were supposed to shoot at, and did not have to play with maps and do problems in trigonometry before they could open fire.

All this was learned when the men went over the ground the next day, after the enemy had retreated.

A road curved around the hill on which the Americans were, and went directly north, skirting the woods to the west. Due to the conformation of the ground, this road was dead space, so far as the enemy was concerned. Dead space is ground that can not be reached by fire, either because there is some natural obstruction, or because the guns can not be depressed sufficiently to cover it. Therefore, and this is the important part, two guns had been placed in the woods, just west of the bend in the road, so that they swept the road throughout its length.

Probably these gunners had orders not to fire except in case of a general attack, as otherwise they would give away their position and might be captured by an energetic raiding-party. That there were neither raiders nor energy in the American lines that night had nothing to do with it. It was into these guns that Ruby had gone, and the foregoing was the only reason that could be assigned for the fact that he wasn't fired at, instead of being taken.

The enemy withdrawal began several hours before daybreak, in order to be well under way before it was light enough for balloon or airplane observation. The two guns in the woods would be the first to go, and a messenger went down to them to order them back. A cautious nudge, a few silent motions, and the crews prepared to take down their guns and sneak back across the road into the wheat.

Now these two guns were of different types, one was a big water-cooled affair that was to take the bulk of the work of covering the road, and the other was a light one, so that its crew could pick it up and run around in the woods with it, wherever there might be need for them to drive back any flanking parties, leaving the big gun free to do its work on the road.

The big one was to go first, but it stuck while it was being dismounted, and many precious minutes were wasted before it finally came free from its mounting, for its crew dared not hammer it. Everything in the withdrawal was run by clockwork, so that the guns up the hill began to go away one after the other, without waiting for the crews from the woods to show up.

The men in the woods knew that this would happen, and were beginning to have healthy fears of being left behind, so that when they got the big gun down, the men that belonged to it took it and themselves away at a most lively gait. The lighter gun was to remain behind, with three men, for fifteen minutes, and then come away in its turn. An *unteroffizier* stayed with it to see that its crew waited the full time before leaving.

A determined advance by the Americans would catch all the guns in the wheat unprepared, probably capture them, and open up a bad hole in the German line. If such an advance were made, machine-gun fire from the flank would slow it up considerably, and it was for this purpose that the light gun remained behind.

The Germans lay there in the holes they had dug to protect themselves from shell fire, until their time was almost up, when the *unteroffizier* went out to the flank a little way to take one last look before he gave the order to depart.

Little Joe cautiously raised his head. He had followed the wire down to the edge of the glade, where he had come on the coil that Ruby had flung down. Joe had heard the Germans taking down the big gun and made up his mind that Ruby was dead and that these men had killed him. He could hear the men panting and swearing in their guttural language, and once he got a glimpse of a coal-scuttle helmet against the white of the road. He started to crawl nearer. Man, for all he is the biggest of big game, is the most easily stalked of any, for his nose is not so keen, his hearing so sharp, nor his eyesight so clear, as the lowliest scuttler along the woodland runways.

Joe, who had kept his home in meat Winter after Winter with his rifle alone, had not the slightest fear of discovery. Besides, the enemy had other things to think about. Shortly there was the faint tread of the first gun-crew getting away, and Joe decided then that a Luger would shortly come into his possession.

He had seen the *unteroffizier* walk out into the clear space and thought that he was the only German left. Carefully, carefully, he began to work around the outer edge of the glade, dodging from one stack of faggots to the next, inching along to get between the *unteroffizier* and the enemy lines. Joe had no thought of shooting. He intended to arise suddenly and insert his revolver into the German's stomach, and then march him back to the battery.

The *unteroffizier* suddenly got up and began to walk directly at Joe. Joe immediately rose to his feet. Three Germans stood up with him, not two feet away. One of them swung the machine gun over his shoulder, turned and saw the shape of Joe's tin hat against the gleam of the road. He gave a startled cry and struck at Joe with the machine-gun. Joe, all shocked and startled as he was, fired his revolver into the German's body.

The man collapsed, the machine-gun crashing into the underbrush. The other two, their nerves jumpy after their night-long vigil, thought the whole Yank Army was upon them and fled instantly, Joe speeding them with a couple of bullets. There was a silence and Joe marveled that he was still alive.

"Whole hawg or none now," he thought. "Le's see how many they is."

He took off his tin hat and hurled it against a tree. There was only one gun that blazed in the direction of the sound. Joe fired twice at the flash and listened. There was a thrashing sound from the bushes and a little coughing moan. Joe waited a minute or two and then began to reload his gun.

Up on the hill, the retreating Germans heard the firing and were disturbed thereby. It was not heavy enough to be an attack of any consequence, but then, one never could tell. They hurriedly set up a gun again, trained it on the woods where the firing was, and shot off a belt, sweeping the gun back and forth, to take in lots of ground. The bullets rattled among the faggots, and some of them swept Joe from his feet, where he crouched reloading his revolver.

When the first shock of it was over, Joe had several cheering thoughts. First, he had avenged Ruby; second, he was wounded and would shortly go back to a hospital where he need do nothing but sleep and eat; and third, the men he had shot were all the Germans there were in that place, else there would have been no firing from the hill.

The most cheering of all was that the last man he had killed had shot at him with a pistol, for Joe had seen it in his hand, when he was coming down the path. Here then, was the Luger on which he had set his heart, and he began to drag himself across the intervening space to where the *unteroffizier* lay. He did have a pistol, sure enough, still clutched in his hand, and Joe picked it up. He felt of it a second or two and then laid it down again.

His hand explored the dead man's waist. The *unteroffizier* had on a web belt, of American make and pattern, and the gun Joe had taken from his hand was a .45 caliber revolver, such as was issued to the American Army. Little Joe suddenly realized that he was growing weak and that his legs were beginning to pain him terribly.

"I reckon he musta got that gun off Ruby," said Little Joe, and then he rolled over and began to apply a first-aid bandage to his wounded leg.

Back on the hill, the captain began to wonder about the men he had sent to lay the wire, and whether Little Joe had got through or not.

THE machine-guns could not get them, if they stayed on their own side of the hill, and the shelling had been confined to the open spaces. The captain's conscience reproached him. He shouldn't have sent that kid off alone. He consulted the top.

"What do you suppose happened to those men we sent to lay the wire?"

"I can give a guess, sir. Thim two first ones found a good hole, and that limb of a Joseph finds them in it, and the three av them spends the night there, smokin' cigarets an' thinking up a good lie to tell in the mornin'."

A mist began to rise, and the smell of the coming dawn was in the air. By the time one realized that the night was over, it was very nearly daylight. A confusion of sounds came from the fog, so varied and faint that it was impossible to tell what they were.

"What the —— is this?" muttered the artillerymen.

The noise was from the river-side, so that they were not as disturbed as if it had come from the other side of the hill, where the enemy was. Men suddenly appeared, many of them, for all the world like a crowd leaving the bleachers after a baseball game and streaming across the field. Doughboys they were, with no packs and their bayoneted rifles slung over their shoulders. "Cho-cho" men, machine-gunners, first aid men, rifle men, Frog interpreters, coming out of the mist and disappearing up the hill.

A whistle blew, and they halted and dropped to their knees. They were fresh troops, for they were all cleanly shaven, and their uniforms were whole. In a day or so, no tramp, however depraved, would own one of them as a companion. The American uniform was weak in the seat and knees, so that a man's underwear would be waving in the breeze the second day he was in action.

"What outfit you guys out of?" asked an artilleryman.

"This is the Steenth Division," said one of the kneeling men. "We're shock troops."

There was a gust of laughter at this from the artillerymen.

"You'll get shocked all right, when you get over that hill."

"Where yuh been shockin' at?" asked another.

"Up in Lorraine."

"Lorraine? That's a fine old ladies' home."

"No, it ain't; it's a fightin' sector; they don't sit around up there with shovels in their mitts."

"We got them shovels to bury you guys with," replied the artillerymen.

A whistle, and the infantry were on their feet again. The last of them disappeared.

"The Jerries are gone," said the captain loudly. "Those mud-churners are going up to a jumping-off position somewhere. There'll be some booted ass up here from the regiment pretty quick ordering me to furnish them with support."

He stood up and stretched his cramped limbs.

"Well, sergeant, let's see how many men we can scare up. You'd think by the looks of things that we were wiped out, but I think they'll all turn up for breakfast."

The captain and the first sergeant went over the hill to see if there was anything left of the guns. Some stretcher-bearers were at work there, and a corporal and the chaplain were writing down names from identification tags. A and B batteries were in the field, where the long grass hid the bodies, but C battery was in the road. The captain swallowed hard once or twice, and looked away.

"For ——'s sake, let's get away from here," he said.

He and the hard-boiled old top, who dared not speak lest his trembling voice betray his nearness to tears, went down into the patch of pines where the horses had been left.

They went by a roundabout way, through the wheat, so as to avoid C battery.

"There's where some of those squareheads were last night," said the captain, pointing to a shallow hole, like a coffin, and two similar holes alongside and slightly advanced from the first one.

The gunner lay in the first hole, and the ammunition-passers lay in the other two, with the gun between them.

The three looked across to where the gun shields of the battery showed on the other hill. The top voiced the thought of all.

"You could toss a stone over there," said he, " 'tis a wonder the boche didn't get killed wid their own bullets bouncin' back from the gun shields."

They continued on, crossed the road, and went into the woods and then the clearing where Ruby had been gathered in.

A medical corps man came up to them there.

"We've found an artilleryman in the woods here, sir, and I thought the captain might like to see him just as we found him."

"How come?" asked the top.

"Well, he wiped out a machine-gun crew before they got him."

"I'll say I want to see him," said the captain.

Little Joe lay on a stretcher, looking very clay-like. The medico showed the Old Man the body of the *unteroffizier* and the other German. The top examined the machine-gun, picking it up and resting it against a tree.

"Did yez try to kill off the whole German army?" he asked.

"I was tryin' to get me a Luger," said Little Joe, "but they didn't have none."

They carried Little Joe to a first aid station, where the captain appeared after a while to see how he was getting along.

"I've brought you a Luger, Joe," he said. "Wrublofski sold the one he had to the executive officer, who doesn't need it any more, poor lad, so I've brought it down to you."

"Thank you, suh," said Joe.

He looked at the Luger for a moment, and then laid it down beside him on the stretcher. It was plain that he had something else on his mind.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" asked the captain.

"I was jus' studyin'," said Little Joe, " 'bout how nice it would be if I could take that machine-gun along too."

ONE QUIET LIFE

by J. D. N.

SHE must have been seventy. A mild, gentle old lady with faded blue eyes and a faded, diffident voice. Her frail, veined hands rested limply in her lap as if the slightest movement would snap them at the wrist. She wore a plain blouse of gray flannel and a rusty black dress without shape that covered the very tips of her square-toed shoes. Sitting bolt upright in her chair, hardly moving her lips when she spoke, she seemed to be made of glass, brittle to the touch.

I had been told that of all the residents of Noumea she had lived the most strenuous life. Yet she said:

"Why no, nothing's ever really happened. No, I don't think so, not really."

And then I found out that she had been born on a trading-schooner somewhere up in the Banks Islands, and that her mother had died the week after, and the schooner had been attacked when it anchored off Mota where the dead woman was to be buried.

She had been christened Mercy because the attack failed.

She skipped twenty years of her life with the comment—

"Father always said I should have gone to school—but I liked the sea."

Then she married and went to live in a shack near Oubatche at the northern end of New Caledonia. The Kanakas were "pretty quiet," but one night they came knocking at the door while her husband was away. She opened the door a crack, and in rushed four of them in their war paint "and all." She shot two of them dead. The others fled.

"But they caught Tom a while later."

Then she went to keep house for her three brothers, and nothing more happened to her except that "sometimes the Kanakas were pretty nasty if they'd been drinking."

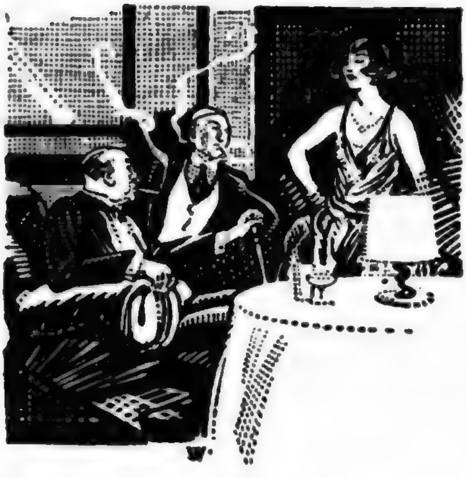
Two of her brothers lost their heads on such an occasion, and she only saved the other by dragging him twenty yards to shelter. Even then—

"What with tending Harry and the baby, and keeping my ears open for those Kanakas, and thinking of Will and Hugh, I got no sleep *that* night."

After that her days were eventless. Her son was a good boy, now living in Australia, making money. She kept house for her brother Harry who couldn't do much for himself because his "leg never mended quite proper."

"But I like it here," she smiled. "It's nice and quiet. Noumea is quite a town now."

When I left she was standing over a wood fire preparing her brother's supper.



DERELICT*

by

Thomas McMorrow

"The Man Who Wouldn't Be King," "Ikey Baumgart's Burglary Insurance," etc.

THE Duke of Tuckersville swung his swagger Malacca stick against his faultlessly creased trouser-leg and sauntered down Ninth Avenue. The bright thoroughfare of Broadway to the east was filling with the slow-moving crowds from the theaters on the side streets; workaday Ninth Avenue had gone to bed. The Duke was sauntering toward Forty-Second Street.

He hesitated before "Tot" Menafey's saloon, drifted to the door, opened it noiselessly a scant inch and looked in.

A single customer or friend was conversing with Tot at the farther end of the shining mahogany bar. Tot's hands were resting on the bar; they were large and heavy hands, freckled and red and hairy; the fingers were long and thick and knobby, and reddened and cracked by incessant sopping in water. The cluster of lights over the gilt cash-register brought out the polished blue of Tot's massive and undershot jaw, and left in shadow the cavernous eye-openings. As he stood there with small bristly head, swelling neck and spreading shoulders he looked like a well-meaning but melancholy gorilla.

The Duke's single eye at the crack in the doorway surveyed the peaceful and decorous interior. It took in the stacks of glittering glasses and goblets below the long mirrors back of the bar—champagne glasses, tall-stemmed and belling suddenly like mushrooms; tall and fluted Pilsner glasses, cocktail glasses like tulips, blunt whisky-glasses with no nonsense about them, with the precise base-diameter interior of a silver half-dollar and three inches high. It traveled over the spotless floor of hexagonal tiles, past the shining, golden cuspidors to the mahogany and marble of the lunch-counter.

Back of the lunch-counter were glass-doored shelves, made for rare whiskies and wines for which Tot could go ceremoniously on a prodigal patron's demand. On the marble slab were goblets in which were forks and spoons in water. There was a small gas-range for broiling frankfurters, and there was a huge scarlet-faced mass of roast beef. The beef was cold; the grease on the platter below it was congealed and the hue of ivory streaked with black. Bread was there on a wooden board, in loaf and in ready slices.

"Just a minute," said Tot to his friend.

His melancholy, gray eyes were contemplating the crack of the door and that spot of reflected brightness which was the Duke of Tuckersville's eye.

From the lunch-counter the Duke's eye traveled back to Tot Menafey. It regarded Tot incuriously, casually; it was about to pass over him when it was meshed in the latter's glance. The two men looked at each other. The friend at the bar yawned, shook the broken ice in his glass and stared into the mirror.

In the eye of the Duke of Tuckersville was a question; it was comprehended of Tot Menafey, and a slight contraction of

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**This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See first contents page.*

the muscles of his face answered it; it was answered partly by his rigidity of posture, his inflexibility. The Duke understood. Then as if he had come only for this mute interchange of views he closed the street-door noiselessly again and sauntered on toward Forty-Second Street.

"Nothing," growled Tot, answering his friend's careless query. "Nothing!"

The Duke held on down Ninth Avenue and turned into Forty-Second Street.

He strolled eastward, glancing into restaurant windows, pausing before French pastry-shops to contemplate the deliciously tinted cakes—the crackly Napoleons, the luscious brown and maple éclairs, the many-storied Mocha tarts. He inhaled the exotic odors from Hungarian restaurants and Spanish restaurants, Roumanian restaurants and Greek restaurants. As he passed Eighth Avenue he was blown upon by the Oriental aroma of a Chinese tea-house; he raised his head to see the black-and-gold dragon and the jagged letters which spelled "Garden of Cathay."

As ever during fourteen months last past the Duke had nothing to do but amuse himself, no place to go but for a good time. One can amuse oneself thoroughly in fourteen months; one can exhaust the possibilities even of Broadway and streets east and west. The Duke was going nowhere in particular tonight; he knew of no place where he had not been, no place where he could be assured of a good time now.

And still his zest for living was unfagged. He looked, eagerly into the foyers of the theaters, from which crowds were slowly issuing. He looked with envy at the laughing couples in the darting taxicabs.

He gazed through the plaques of lace on the windows of Hublein's fashionable "Palais de Danse," and scanned purblindly the couples at the little tables about the dancing-floor. He looked at the men, correct in black and white, leaning faultlessly brushed heads forward with set smiles to catch the confidences of the bare-armed and altogether beautiful ladies.

He looked into the bright faces of the crowd about with eagerness, with sympathy, and still with an expression in which there was a shadow of detachment. He had been through it all; he had seen it all; he knew all that they were so avid in learning.

"There's the Duke!"

"Where?"

"There!"

"As I live—the Duke himself!"

A large private car drew in to the curb, and there was a rush from it of men in correct black and white. They seized hold of the Duke with merry shouts, and proceeded to half-accompany him and half-drag him toward the waiting vehicle, whose uniformed chauffeur lifted an eyebrow to catch the scene and then stared stiffly and indifferently ahead.

The Duke was jammed into place between two silky and scented young women, and the car rolled off.

"Where have you been keeping yourself, Duke?" shouted one of the black-and-white men over the shoulder of the young lady who had resumed her place on his lap.

"Say, Dukey, we haven't seen you in a dog's age," said the young woman whom he was crushing against the side of the car; and she slipped her soft little hand into his and squeezed his lax fingers.

"Been away," said the Duke.

"Out of town?"

"Yes. Out of town. Been rusticating."

"Oh, you Dukey!" trilled the young lady on his opposite side. "Who was with you, you rascal?"

THE run to the car's destination was short. It pulled up almost immediately again before a remodeled brownstone house in Forty-Fourth Street near Eighth Avenue. The travelers piled out and hurried up the steps.

The street-floor of the house was tenanted by an employment agency for waiters; the immediate front was a small barroom and restaurant.

The upper floors were tenanted by the "Merry Mice," a night club. The club displayed no name or insignia except a small white board upon which was painted a dancing mouse in blue. The club was a private, incorporated institution, composed of a select crew of actors and actresses who liked their fun, and a very few rich gentlemen and amateurs who were willing to pay for it. It was privately incorporated so as to avoid the annoying supervision of the public authorities.

"We've got the Duke!" yelled one of the ladies into the long dining-room and festal hall which took up the entire second floor.

"Things will wake up now!" cried happy

voices. "Pommery—Adrian! Wine here, Adrian!"

"Hello, Duke!" bawled the monologist who had been doing an extempore turn on the low stage at the end of the long chamber.

The Duke sauntered down the room between the little tables, catching at the many hands extended in greeting. He had held on to his gloves and stick, and carried his smart gray hat in hand as if he did not intend to stay long.

Jessica Dupuy, queen of the peerless chorus of Shustein's Beauty Show, lifted her long lashes from her rosy cheek and let the candid glance of her large, gray eyes rest on the Duke. One month ago her engagement to the Duke had been the occasion of an all-night party in the club; his pledge was upon her tapering finger; but now there was the faintest crossing of lines between her penciled eye-brows; if such a thing were credible it might have been thought that Jessica was registering annoyance.

"Monty!" she cooed, putting forth her hand.

There was one chair beside her at the table. The tenant held his place for a moment, and then half-rose in greeting; his attitude showed no purpose or inclination to resign in favor of the Duke.

"Hello, Fleischmann," said the Duke in a flat tone.

"Hello, my boy. Been away, haven't you?"

His close-set eyes wandered slowly over the Duke as he sank back into his chair.

"Been away," said the Duke.

"You'll come around to see me; won't you, Monty?" breathed Jessica, putting a world of urgency into her sweet voice. "You can't know how I've missed you. Tomorrow perhaps you'll call?"

"Tomorrow," accepted the Duke, staring at her with a sudden sobering.

"Until tomorrow!" she smiled brightly over her shoulder as he passed on.

Fleischmann's eyes followed him, and remained on him in studious contemplation until the Duke sank into a proffered chair and looked back.

The Duke had chosen a place in an obscure corner behind a palm. Sitting quietly now, looking momentarily morose with his panoply of gait and air and expression stripped from him, he was to be seen as a rather insignificant young man of twenty-seven or twenty-eight. He was tall and narrow; his face was pale and commonplace; his nose was sharp; his chin and mouth showed that weak wilfulness which goes sometimes with noble blood.

His sole companion at the table was a fat and puffy young man, lumpy-featured, hopelessly plebeian—at a venture, stupid. His evening dress fitted him snugly; in his silk shirt-bosom were five diamond studs; Benny Rosenwasser was worth ten millions of dollars, but there could never be any class to Benny. One could see that he admired the Duke humbly; he was delighted to be in his company; he leaned forward, all smiles, restraining an obvious tendency to fondle the Duke.

"Where you been, Duke?" he bubbled. "I've been asking for you all over. Where you been keeping yourself? Gosh, but you're a sight for sore eyes!"

"Down in the country," said the Duke, gulping the champagne which Adrian had set before him.

He snapped his fingers impatiently.

"Adrian!" he called. "Get me a sandwich with bacon and chicken and lots of mayonnaise and— Where's that Adrian?"

"Have another drink," urged Benny Rosenwasser, pouring. "Down in the country, hey? You come from down in the country, don't you, Duke? No offense, you know."

"From Tuckersville," said the Duke, into whose cheek a tint of rose had come from the frothing wine.

His eyes brightened. He felt the exhilaration and knew its cause and wondered that he should have been so easily affected. He accepted a cigaret from Benny's gold case, lighted it and leaned back at ease.

"Place named after you?"

"After the family. My great-grandfather was the first settler there. After *me?* That was before I was born!"

He laughed suddenly and heartily at Benny's innocence.

"Why, yes," he said in a deep and confident voice, "I guess we Tuckers were always about all there was to Tuckersville. Oh, it's quite a busy little burg these days! No hick town, I tell you. My father was president of the First National Bank of Tuckersville."

"The First National!"

"Of Tuckersville—yes. He had mortgages on about half the town."

"Left you well fixed, I bet."

"Well—passably. A matter of half a million. That's a lot of money for Tuckersville."

"But you did better here in New York," said Benny comfortably. "I hear you got tips on stocks from Fleischmann. He's right on the inside in Wall Street, isn't he? You must have cleaned up down there, the way you've been spending money. So you were back to Tuckersville. Well, well! And how is every little thing in your old home town?"

"About the same; about the same," said the Duke, yawning and passing his hand over his eyes.

"Folks glad to see you?"

"You can imagine! A man that's been living on the Big Time in New York, coming back to a little place like that?"

"I bet you!" chuckled Benny kindly. "A regular Old Home Week, hey, Duke? You got relations in Tuckersville, haven't you?"

"Some aunts."

"And they were there? They met you when you got off the train and put you in the old one-horse shay and drove you right down Main Street. I can see it, boy; I can see it! It's great to come home like that!"

"Great," murmured the Duke, smiling at the table-cloth.

"Have a drink," said Benny Rosenwasser. "Yes, Duke, those are the best things in life. The simple things like that. I've often got to thinking so, after some big party when I got a big head. Oh, I do a lot of deep thinking sometimes! But tell me about it, Duke! I like to hear such stuff. Did you see the house where you were born, and all that?"

"The house where I was born," repeated the Duke in a sentimental voice. "Yes, I saw it, Benny. It's an old two-story-and-attic clapboard house, set away back from the road. My great-grandfather built it, and the family never left it, even after they got rich. There are elms there that my great-grandfather planted, and now they're so big that two people can sit behind them and not be seen."

"Two people!" said Benny, winking. "You have a girl in the old home town, have you, Duke? Look out, I'll tell Jessica!"

"A regular girl," said the Duke with a tender inflection.

"What's her name?"

"Sally Bumstead."

"Bumstead?"

"Bumstead."

"She's waiting, Duke?"

"She's waiting."

"And you're going back to her?"

"I'm going back to her," droned the Duke. "I'm going to chuck all this. I'm going back to the girl that likes me for myself, and I'm going to buy the old Hemingway place, and we're going to settle down."

"What about that house you were talking about, the house where you were born?"

"That's sold," said the Duke, suddenly opening his eyes. "I sold that house. I told you I sold that house! What are you talking about?"

"Don't get sore, Duke," said Benny. "I thought you liked to talk about such things. Jessica's looking fine tonight, isn't she?"

"Topping."

"What did you pay for that ring you gave her? I was often wanting to ask you, Duke. No offense, you know."

"Twelve thousand dollars. That was the bill I paid. I wasn't with her when she picked it out."

"It's a corking ring all right. Say, it must have cost you something that time you starred her on the road in the 'Cat and Mouse.' Shustein was telling me the show sort of flivvered. No offense, you know. Of course, you can stand things like that, seeing that you've been playing tips from Fleischmann. He's right on the inside, and anything you get from him is red-hot! You must have made a barrel of easy money out of him!"

He wetted his red lips enviously.

"Oh, yes," said the Duke. "Indeed!"

"Hello!" exclaimed Benny. "What's up over there?"

A COUPLE had been quarreling, listlessly and disjointedly, some tables away. They had been sitting with faces averted, turning only to snap remarks. Suddenly the young man was roused to cold fury; he started to his feet, snapped his fingers in the girl's face, and strode from the room.

When he had gone she dropped her head and sat motionless for a minute under the watchful eyes of those about. She threw up her head defiantly, passed her jeweled hand over her glass, drank it half down, put it fumblingly back on to the table and rose with a clutching hand at her throat. She wavered on her feet, uttered a choked scream, slumped back into the chair, and lay over onto the table.

"She's done it!"

"I knew she'd do it!"

"He drove her to it at last—the dirty little cur!"

"Wake up, dearie," begged another young lady, lifting the girl's head and shoulders from the table and caressing her white face. "You're all right now, dearie! Open your eyes. Say, is any of these mutts here a doctor?"

"Poisoned herself!" said Benny.

The Duke turned with a flare of interest in his face. There was no horror in his expression, no sentiment of revulsion, but only a quick brightness. He got up.

Fleischmann, who had been watching the Duke steadily and studiously for the past twenty minutes, rose from his place beside Jessica Dupuy and came forward.

He reached out and took the glass from the hand of the Duke, who had been agitating the flat remnant of the drink and eying the white powder at the bottom.

"Poison," said Fleischmann.

"Poison nothing!" contradicted the Duke, apparently out of mere perverseness. "I'll bet it's nothing but a headache powder!"

"I'd like to bet you twenty dollars it's poison," said Fleischmann.

"I'll bet you!" challenged the Duke, glaring at him.

"How do you expect to prove it?"

"I'll drink it myself," said the Duke, looking around him at the frightened faces with a hardy smile. "Is it a bet?"

He swirled the fluid around to make a solution of the mysterious white powder.

"Stop him!"

"He'd do it!"

"Like the ——, he would."

"I tell you he'll do it; the Duke will do *anything!*"

Fleischmann stood easily by; he was smiling with the corners of his heavy lips drawn down.

A young man sprang from a table near by and struck at the glass in the Duke's hand. He was too late. The Duke had thrown the glass to his lips, tilted it up and drained it to the last drop. He was holding it there uptilted in bravado when it was struck from his hand.

"He's done it!"

"I tell you I saw her put the stuff in it!"

The Duke walked back to his table, leisurely abstracted a cigaret from the case lying open there, lit it and turned again to Fleischmann.

"Well?" he aid in a tranquil voice. "It was a headache powder. Come across with the twenty dollars!"

They watched him for a moment in a dead silence, noting his unconstrained posture, noting the natural flush of his cheek, weighing the tone of his voice. Then some one clapped.

"She's coming out of it," called the unregarded young lady who was ministering to the unconscious girl. "She only fainted! Come on, Becky; pull yourself together. You're spoiling the parade!"

Fleischmann drew out his pocket-book, his gaze returning ever to the face of the Duke, and selected among a sheaf of crisp bank-notes.

"Your twenty," he said, extending the money.

The Duke took it carelessly, folded it with the fingers of one hand and slipped it into his outer jacket-pocket.

"Needed it bad, Duke?" breathed Fleischmann.

The Duke's head snapped back, and he stared at the Wall Street broker. Fleischmann—broad, heavy-faced, immaculate in evening dress — put his newly lighted Havana to his mouth and drew leisurely on it. He removed it and permitted himself again that queer and penetrating smile.

The Duke's glance wavered; it went past Fleischmann and touched on Jessica Dupuy, sitting with oval chin in cupped hands and regarding the rivals for her favor. When she moved, the great solitaire which had been the pride of Tiffany's window threw out winking flames. The Duke looked past her at the many couples frozen in an attitude of attention, who were trying to catch the significance of the two motionless figures and sensing a new development but having no understanding of it.

"Adrian!" called the Duke.

The stout little waiter appeared and bowed dumpily.

"Let me have the night's check, Adrian," called the Duke. "I'm sorry, folks, but I have to run along. Another magnum, Adrian, and then let me have the check."

"The Duke of Tuckersville!" they cried.

"Here's to you, Duke!"

"Here's looking at you, Duke! They can't beat you!"

Jessica Dupuy rose from her place and came forward with hands extended yearningly and a world of appeal in her lovely face. Fleischmann put forth his arm haltingly; he withdrew it before her haughty look. She came up to the Duke.

"Come sit with me, dear," she said. "It was heartless of you to leave me so. You'll never leave me again—promise me! Come, dear—come to me!"

"Tomorrow," said the Duke, turning his back on her and going to the doorway where Adrian was trying to catch his eye.

"The check, *m'sieu,*" he said.

The Duke glanced at the slip; it called for payment of two hundred and forty-five dollars.

"On my account, Adrian," said the Duke shortly.

"*Pardon, m'sieu,*" said Adrian, abasing himself with a gesture of head and body in which there was infinite regret. "But *m'sieu* perceives that this check— well, of course——"

"For you, Adrian," said the Duke, slipping into the waiter's hand a crisp twenty-dollar note.

Adrian bent an eyebrow and an eye down upon the numeral. He smiled graciously. "*Certainement!* Thees check— Well, *of course, m'sieu!*"

"Going, Duke?"

"Don't go yet, Dukey! Aw, gosh, you'll take all the life out of the party!"

"Sorry," smiled the Duke. "Have a good time, everybody! I got to run along!"

He set his smart gray hat at a rakish angle, smiled flashingly at two beautiful ladies who were holding out their arms to him in last appeal, nodded to the doorkeeper and sauntered down the brownstone steps into the quiet of Forty-Fourth Street.

He walked back to Seventh Avenue and so again to Forty-Second Street. Slapping his Malacca stick lightly against the faultless fall of his trousers, he stood idly before restaurant windows, looking at the peach-baskets heaped with gray-brown mushrooms, studying the curves and declivities and apertures of broad yellow-brown apple-pies, watching the midnight diners picking and choosing without appetite in the lengthy menus.

Eating seemed to be the sole business of life on western Forty-Second Street. People were passing up and down the marble stairs to the Chinese restaurant; people were going in and out of the doorways to Hungarian eating-houses, Italian *table d'hôtes*, even up and down the stairs of cheap and dirty cellar lunchrooms. He had never noticed before what an overshadowing part of life eating is.

The exhilaration of the heady champagne had passed away in the sharp air of this April night. It had left a sensation of loss and emptiness behind. He had not eaten since six o'clock of the day before, and then hurriedly.

The Duke turned into Ninth Avenue. Workaday Ninth Avenue was gone to bed. A lone Italian, fighting sleep beside a fruit-stand beneath the moaning flare of a gas-light, opened heavy eyes hopefully as the Duke's pace slowed in passing. There was still light in Tot Menafey's place, and the Duke was drawn to it as the moth is drawn to the flame.

He opened the door noiselessly a scant inch and looked in.

Tot and his friend—or perhaps another friend—were conversing at the end of the bar. The gilt cash-register showed a sale of one dollar; somebody had bought a drink—probably two drinks—of whiskey, each glass of which costs precisely a half-dollar on Ninth Avenue.

The Duke's eye at the crack sought the melancholy eyes of Tot Menafey, seeking to renew the silent communion. Tot did not look. The Duke's questing eye roved about the saloon, flickering over the scarlet-faced beef and the curling slips of bread, and then shooting back to gage the thoughts of Tot Menafey.

Tot went lumberingly to jerk some beer, looked at the product and lumbered to the glass-enclosed pump. With his broad back to the room he did something to this pump, which promptly set up a clanking and pounding.

Tot turned to continue his conversation. He opened his mouth and then compressed it.

"Just a minute!" he said.

He came lumberingly but swiftly from behind the bar, rushed upon the Duke, who had entered and stood facing away from him, seized the Duke with big and red and water-cracked hands, rushed him to the door and hurled him into the street.

"And *stay out!*" roared Tot Menafey.

"Who was that?" asked the friend, agitating the ice in his glass.

He had watched the incident in the mirror back of the bar as one might watch a moving picture, interested and yet aware that he was watching shadows.

"A bum!" grumbled Tot. "Dressed like Astor's pet horse, and not a dime in his pocket. Never buys a drink. Slides in and hits up my free lunch and slides out, wriggling his cane. Been living off of me for the last two weeks, he has—and I'm through with him. If he looks in that door again so help me Bob——"

He heaved his big shoulders disgustedly, and turned to shut off the pump.

WHEN CARLETON LOST HIS TEMPER

by Hugh Pendexter

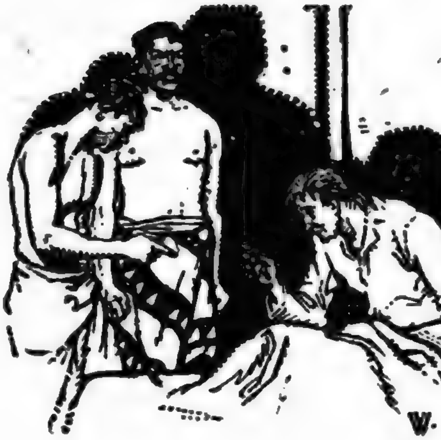
ON JULY 25, 1776, General Guy Carleton's expedition against Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga was well under way. Lieutenant William Digby, of the 53d regiment, and an officer under Carleton, describes his commander as being reserved even with friends, but kind to prisoners. On the date given above, Brig. General Patrick Gordon, commanding the first brigade of British, started to ride from St. John on the Sorel River to the St. Lawrence, where he would cross to Montreal. The distance by the Chambly Road was about thirty miles, while that by the way of La Prairie was considerably shorter. The army was camped along the Chambly Road and it was supposed to be safe.

Lieutenant Benjamin Whitcomb, a famous Connecticut ranger, with four men, happened to be scouting the La Prairie Road as General Gordon came along. He and his men fired on the general and his escort. The former was struck in the shoulder by two balls and died the next day. General Carleton, enraged, offered fifty guineas reward for Whitcomb alive, declaring he would hang him, and sent his Indians to capture him. General Gordon had been warned by his quartermaster that Whitcomb was supposed to be in the vicinity of the La Prairie Road, and replied that he hoped to meet Whitcomb.

The result of this killing was perhaps the most intemperate letter one commanding officer ever sent to another; for in reply to General Washington's request for an exchange of prisoners he wrote:

"His Excellency, General Carleton orders that the commanding officers of corps will take especial care that every one under their command be informed that *Letters*, or *messages* from *Rebels*, *Traitors* in Arms against the King, *Rioters*, *Disturbers of the public peace*, *Plunderers*, *Robbers*, *Assassins*, or *Murderers*, are on no occasion to be admitted; that should emissaries from such lawless Men again presume to approach the Army, whether under the name of Flag-Of-Truce men, or Ambassadors, except when they come to implore the King's mercy, their person shall be immediately seized and committed to close confinement to be proceeded against as the Law directs: Their papers and Letters, for whomsoever directed—even this Com'r in Chief—are to be delivered to the Provost Marshal, that unread and unopen'd they may be burned by the hands of the common Hangman."

The effect of this intemperate letter soon was reflected in the behavior of Carleton's subordinates, and he, either ashamed, or fearing for the results, issued another order for his officers "not to return evil for evil." It was merely an episode and is of documentary interest insomuch as it proves how one naturally cold and reserved can flare up to a pitch of red-hot rage. And it very soon became apparent that General Washington's communications must be treated with the utmost respect.



THE COME-BACK

A Complete Novelette

by

J.D.Newsom

Author of "The Jade Ax," "In the Rain," etc.

AT SUNDOWN when the off-shore breeze died away a cloud of sand-flies sifted into the room through the gaping holes in the wire screens. They settled lightly on Hector Carchot's face and hands and wrists where they dined ferociously. For a while he slept on, snoring gently, but at last the accumulated venom of a hundred stings called him back to wakefulness.

After a few listless slaps he drew from his trouser pocket a large, soiled handkerchief which he spread over his upturned countenance and again tried to recapture the thread of his dreams. But his breath raised the handkerchief and the sand-flies crept beneath it to resume their feast. When they managed to work their way through the tangled forest of his beard and bite the tender skin of his neck, he called out:

"Wundaru! Bring the smudges!"

His voice echoed through the empty house and his summons went unanswered. Drowsily he shook his head in disapprobation and grumbled as he had grumbled a thousand times before—

"I must speak to that boy—make him understand that he is a little too—a little too——"

Then full consciousness returned and he laughed mellowly as he flapped a little more vigorously at the insects.

"I am abandoned," he commented. "It is very sad. But they might have prepared the smudges. No consideration, these Kanakas."

Still talking to himself he rolled out of the hammock and groped in the gathering dusk for his slippers. Leisurely, still fanning himself, he ambled out to the kitchen where on a filth-encumbered table he found a lamp half-filled with oil.

"Shall I," he pondered, "take it back to the living-room or shall I stay here?"

He decided to stay where he was because the evening was very hot and—why journey through three rooms when there was a chair close at hand?

He yawned, surveying the disordered kitchen with an impersonal air of deep commiseration. Out of the food-box whose door gaped open cockroaches issued, and busy ants, having solved the riddle of the tin cigaret cans encasing the legs of the meat-safe, formed an endless chain between a slab of salt pork and a hole in the moldy flooring.

"This must be fixed," he said with determination. "I must have the place cleaned and disinfected. Above all disinfected. This is a hot-bed of disease."

A grease-stained fragment of newspaper lying near at hand caught his eye. He picked it up and became absorbed as he read the advertisement of a Paris furrier offering ladies' cloaks for a consideration of twenty-five thousand francs.

"Bargain!" he exclaimed, addressing the smoking lamp. "A mere bagatelle!"

He forgot all about his house-cleaning resolve, cocked up his feet and allowed his mind to travel back through the years to the time when he, too, had been privileged to gaze at the displays in the shop

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"The Come-Back," copyright, 1923, by J. D. Newsom.

windows of the Chaussée d'Antin. Eventually, sighing contentedly, his head dropped forward on his chest, his lips slowly parted until they hung loosely open, and he slept again while the cockroaches gnawed with a faint rasping sound at the soles of his slippers.

Thus do men meet their fate; rarely do they rise like demi-gods to face an awful crisis; they spoil the finest situation with barren platitudes; they become cheaply facetious on the brink of oblivion. And Hector Carchot snored when he should have been calling down maledictions upon himself and his Maker.

After eventless, placid years of steady growth and achievement calamity after calamity had rushed upon him destroying in a season the work of a lifetime. His trees were blighted and rotting, jungle overran his fields, for his laborers, weakened by a terrible outbreak of yaws, had succumbed *en masse* to an epidemic of pulmonary disease, and the survivors that afternoon had stolen his ketch and sailed away—anywhere to escape the curse that seemed to have settled on Rapanga.

At first Carchot had tried to fight the overwhelming odds, but sensing the futility of the struggle he had shrugged his shoulders resignedly and given up his mind and his body to the crass laziness possible only in the tropics where all nature conspires to make the downfall easy, even pleasant until the very bottom is reached and then——

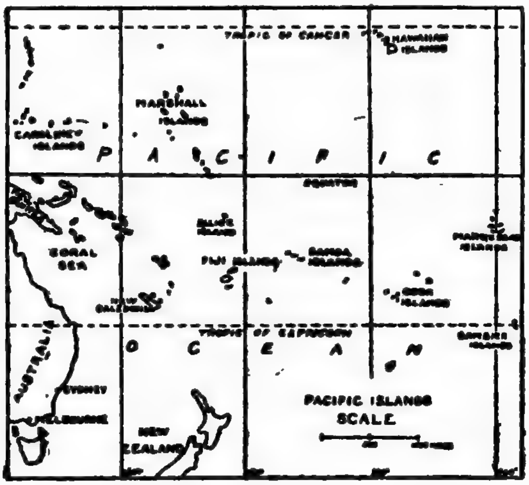
Carchot slept with his mouth hanging open and his arms dangling loosely down the sides of the chair. He was a man in his late thirties, of average build, grown flabbily corpulent at the waist-line but not otherwise stout. Beneath his closed eyes there were heavy pouches attesting his sluggish mode of life and warning of impending physical collapse.

Some time toward midnight, long after the oil-lamp had flickered and gone out, and the moon threw a beam of bluish light across the far end of the room, Carchot awoke with the uncomfortable feeling that some one was prowling about the house.

Now, the nearest white man lived a day's journey away, southward across the ocean, and his only neighbors were the people of the hills whom he knew by experience were not to be trusted to roam too close at hand after dark.

"Must be rats," he reassured himself.

And, because he had not enough ambition left even to safeguard his life, he kept his eyes shut tightly while he tried to convince himself that he must have been dreaming.



THE NEW HEBRIDES ARE NORTH OF NEW CALEDONIA

Then he felt two hands lay hold of his shoulders and shake him with violence.

"Where's everybody?" bellowed a voice. "Where's your master, you —— black cook?"

"I am my own master," Carchot managed to gasp between shakes. "If you will be so amiable as to stop——"

He was allowed to drop back on to his seat and the owner of the hands expressed his astonishment.

"What's happened here, anyway? Where are all your house-boys? What are you doing in the kitchen? Where——"

"The tone is familiar," yawned Carchot, rubbing his eyes, "very familiar indeed."

It was Brailley—only Brailley—sprung out of the immensity of the Pacific Ocean, Brailley who called perhaps once a year to trade cheap goods for the island's produce.

The fears which, for a moment, had raced like fire through Carchot's mind, died down. Once again he became the drowsy, ironical observer of his own moods and misfortunes. He was rather proud to be found sound asleep in the desolate kitchen with his feet propped on the table. It was a proof of his complete indifference to his surroundings, a token of his nonchalance in the face of adversity.

"Yes," he went on, speaking in English,

with an ease which put his visitor's speech to shame, "but, my dear Brailley, may I in turn ask a question? Why this unseemly hour—why?"

"Make a light, for the love of Pete, shake a leg and get busy. Come on; move!"

"Time was made to waste—and the lamp is without oil, I grieve to say. Now, candles, let me think."

Carchot stretched his arms above his head, making the joints crack.

"You will find candles somewhere, either on the top shelf in the closet, or in the meat-safe or on the floor. In fact somewhere within easy reach."

Brailley took hold of him by the coat collar and jerked him to his feet.

"Are you all alone—no servants at all?" he demanded, mystified.

"Quite correct," admitted Carchot, rubbing the nape of his neck. "I am alone, or was until you came. I suppose you want me to find my own candles. It is very inconvenient."

He shuffled about aimlessly, yawning and coughing, fumbling along shelves and inside cupboards while Brailley drummed impatiently on the table.

"Hurry up," the latter ejaculated. "What d'you think I've come to see you for at two in the morning—fun?"

"No, probably not, but *I* am amused," murmured Carchot as he rummaged in the meat safe. "Ah, here is a candle, *un tout petit bout*, but big enough to illuminate your kindly face. Have you a match?"

When the meager light drove the shadows into the far corners of the room he found to his disgust that he could not bring himself to look Brailley full in the face. As the match flared, for one fleeting second, he had seen the look of doubt and contempt in the other man's eyes, and without warning, he was ashamed. To hide his embarrassment he went on talking as he bent over the food chest.

"I think I am hungry. In the darkness I thought I touched something suspiciously like a can——"

"Quit it and come here. I want to talk to you."

Brailley's voice cut like a whip-lash—it had the ring of command he used when speaking to Kanakas. He had gaged the depth of Carchot's degradation.

A mist arose before the latter's eyes, and he sought to excuse his position, answering the unspoken questions with a flood of words.

"You see, I have had *tous les malheurs*. It is not my fault, not my fault at all. First it was the sickness. That was bad enough! And then the blight—all my trees gone. Not enough men to burn them. They rotted overnight. Twenty years' work—decay and death as my reward. Do you call that fair? I could not pay my servants——"

"Closed your account at Vila?"

"Closed it? No. But it is so far away! So they came to me this morning, all that were left of them, and they took the boat and I——"

"And you had mat fever, if you want the truth. You were too hog-lazy to stop 'em. Just let things slide. This—" Brailley jerked his thumb at the befouled floor—"this didn't happen in one day. Not it. I 'eard rumors. Wouldn't believe it. 'Struth, you had mat fever!"

"What of it?" retorted Carchot, suddenly aggressive. "What of it, if it suits me? You have the insolence to tell me——"

His puffy cheeks were red with anger, but his lips beneath the ragged mustache trembled as he spoke. He was found out and the news would spread from end to end of the New Hebrides, and the men who had not been wrecked, the prosperous, well-fed men, would laugh at him. Even now he could hear them sneering:

"Carchot's gone to the dogs. Finished. No guts. Never was much good. Caved in when things went a wee bit wrong. Mat fever. Now he'll go native——"

"——! I don't care what you do," Brailley was saying. "It's your lookout. But I want you to do something for me. It may be to your advantage."

Carchot's gust of anger subsided. He had nothing to hide any longer, the worst was over, and he did not care very much. He laughed lazily as with assumed unconcern he swept a pile of dirty crockery on to the floor and sat himself on the table.

"Don't stand," he urged. "Take the chair. It is quite clean. I used it for the first time this evening."

Outside it was still black night, the moon rode high in the sky and its light no longer slanting in through the window fell like a silver curtain between the malodorous room and the cleanliness of the outer world.

"You know Lepillier," said Brailley. "He's a fellow-countryman of yours."

"He is south, on Api, if I remember."

"He is. Don't interrupt. Listen." Again the hard tone of command made Carchot wince. "Lepillier needed recruits. Asked me to get 'em. Wanted sixty men and twenty women. I got 'em all right—they're on board now. Picked 'em up on Malaita. No trouble—all of 'em crazy to come. Women too.

"Everything went fine. Quiet as lambs. Then trouble had to start; just my luck. *I* can't recruit women, I'm not allowed to. You could, but not me. Oh, no! My Government's got some fool notions all right.

"Well, yesterday midday just off Omba, along comes that —— gunboat. Kept trailing me all afternoon. I kept on. Nothing else to do. You know what'd happen if they caught me with twenty women on board.

"At sundown the gunboat was still a couple of miles astern. I knew I was safe if I could hold 'em off until nightfall. They knew it too. Put one shell straight over the old boat. Shrapnel—burst way ahead.

"'That's the stuff,'" thinks I, 'If they can't shoot better'n that I'm safe.'

"But wait, let me tell you, the next shot missed by inches and the next burst slap in the engine-room. One Kanaka blown to bits, three cylinders cracked wide open, the oil-tank leaking like a sieve, and that gang down below howling——"

Carchot shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"You have only yourself to blame," he commented. "You gambled and lost. I suppose they caught you——"

"No," wrathfully rejoined Brailley. "Caught nothing! How d'you think I got here?"

"That's true." Carchot smiled maliciously. "I forgot that. Go on."

"Darn it, keep quiet. The engine didn't matter, not with this wind blowing and night coming on. And I'll bet I know these islands better'n that gang of Aussies. Made a bee-line for your place after dark."

"What for?"

"To land those Kanakas, of course."

"And they——"

"They're ashore by this time, whole blessed bunch of 'em. Wind's dying down. The gunboat will pick me up tomorow for sure."

"So you want to wish eighty Malaita cannibals on to me!" Carchot exclaimed, holding up both hands in protest. "I do not want them. Take them away."

"Oh, I can't waste time jabbering all night," snapped Brailley, coming close to the table. "Can't you understand. Here's eighty husky niggers ready for work. Use 'em. Make 'em sweat. Get things going again. When the coast is clear I'll come back for 'em. Fair enough, ain't it? And if you won't do it for me, do it for Lepillier."

"I don't want your —— Kanakas."

"You're going to take 'em. Get off that table and come with me."

"I——"

"Shut up and get started," thundered Brailley. "Any fool who can't find work for eighty Kanakas for a month or so ain't worth helping. But you're going to help *me*, and by —— if you let me down I'll——"

"All right," agreed Carchot, cowed by the half-uttered threat. "Whatever you say."

Brailley relented. He dragged Carchot out of the house, trotted him along the uneven path, and as they went he talked boisterously, fully convinced that he was conferring a favor on the planter.

"They're raw," he explained. "They want handling, but they're strong and healthy. Just what you need here. Work 'em like ——. In six weeks you can have things running just as smooth as silk. You're in luck. If I hadn't turned up you'd have gone to seed. Now——"

He rattled on and Carchot slouching along beside him caught a little flicker of his enthusiasm.

Yes, he could pull the place together, ditch and drain and furrow and rebuild—make the homestead livable again.

"From the very beginning," he thought, "I must make a fresh start. I can do it, I know I can. But I'm so tired—it is strange—so tired!"

Their feet clogged in the loose sand and they trudged out on to the shelving beach where the waves hurrying out of the night hissed as they broke.

A blurr of voices came from the deep shadows beneath a clump of pandanus-trees close to the water's edge.

"There they are," Brailley grunted with satisfaction. "Come on."

He called out:

"Ho! Vangare, march them out!"

Shouted orders, a crackle of whips—four score natives filed past, their oiled bodies gleaming in the faint bluish light. Big men all of them, big and strong and young. They shuffled across the sand and Carchot caught the sudden glint of their appraising eyes as in passing they peered at him.

Eighty! It seemed a never-ending procession conjured out of black nothingness to vanish again at the far end of the beach. And while Brailley counted them off, Carchot thought—

"In a minute I shall be left alone with them—out here—all alone."

Fear gripped him and his hands shook uncontrollably as he tugged at his beard.

Aloud he said:

"Leave me some one who knows them. I am not very strong and I am not sure——"

Brailley went on with his count.

"Leave Vangare with me until you return," insisted Carchot.

"Seventy-two! Leave Vangare? Not on your life. They're sheep. Herd 'em, bully 'em." Tolerantly—"They're *all right*. I can't spare a man. Sorry."

"But——"

The last of the gang straggled by.

"All square," Brailley concluded. "You've been handling black fellows for years—what's eating you? Just forget that mat fever stuff. Now I got to beat it. You're a good scout. Knew you'd help a friend. So long."

They walked down to the water's edge where a boat was drawn up.

"So long," repeated Brailley, shaking hands. "Back soon."

A splash, a sharp word of command and the boat slipped away, fading into the deceptive half-light, going out toward the schooner that rode at anchor somewhere in the darkness.

Carchot licked at his dry lips, afraid to turn and face the natives who stood waiting for orders in absolute silence.

A minute he waited, wavering, miserably conscious of his utter helplessness. His dread became so acute that at last in self-defense he whirled about and barked—

"Follow me!"

He was astonished at his temerity and grinned when he saw how meekly the recruits answered to the sound of his voice.

"Just as scared of me as I am of them," he chuckled. "What a world! The mouse makes the elephant quake."

And he marched them to the empty hutments behind his house where he bedded them down for the night with the self-assurance of a tyrant marshaling manacled slaves.

FOR a week Carchot found a fresh interest in work, hard work beneath a broiling sun. Had the Kanakas been difficult to lead, had there been among them a single man to resent his orders and stir up trouble, then necessity might have forced him to remain on the alert and conquer the mat fever which crept sluggishly through his veins.

But the laborers accepted their new surroundings without protest, not a murmur arose even when they found themselves obliged to subsist on what scanty rations they could dig in the fields. They rebuilt and improved their huts, they cleaned and patched Carchot's house; all day and every day they chopped and hauled tree-trunks and set them alight in stacks which roared heavenward like great funeral-pyres, blazing and smoking all down the coastline for a mile or more.

They were docile, cheerful and efficient—too efficient. As time went by Carchot found that his advice was superfluous, given a hint and they turned to the task in hand with unbounded energy, carrying it through to completion with an instinctive knowledge of the right thing to do.

One morning Carchot overslept. When he awoke he hurried into his clothes only to find that the gangs were already at work, so he went back to the shade of the deep porch and called for a drink. Then the rot set in.

Through a gap in the bushes surrounding the houses he could see a row of natives going forward stooping low as they slashed their way through the weeds.

"They seem to enjoy that sort of thing," he marveled aloud. He waved his hand at the distant group. "Go ahead, *mes amis*, you have my permission to work as hard as you wish. Do not expect *me* to join you: It is too hot, much too hot."

He sighed, settling himself comfortably in his chair, and insensibly the old lethargy overcame him again. It was so easy to do nothing, nothing at all, not even think.

But the Kanakas were quick to notice the change and they, too, relaxed. At night gathered around the fires they talked, trying to fathom the ways of the strange white man who left them free to do as they liked. When they found the problem beyond their understanding they grew restless, then suspicious, distrustful.

Mbara, one of the new house-boys, finding that he could with impunity openly insult his master, voiced his contempt to his fellows.

"He hides from us because he is afraid," he declared. "If he needs food he comes begging for it. I do not carry it to him. Why should I? Have I been paid as I was told I should be by the man who took us in his boat from our villages? Where is this money?"

"Is that why he gives us no work to do—because he has no money?" asked a heavy, slow-witted woman crouching close to the fire.

"We have been tricked," sneered Mbara. "He has not even white man's food in his house. He eats what I get from the fields. How could he have money?"

"And if he had it to give," put in a man, "where could we buy all the things we were told about—clothes and mirrors and tobacco?"

"Perhaps he will pay us on a given day," some one suggested. "We were promised——"

"What is a promise?" retorted Mbara. "Words are easily spoken and I do not trust this white man."

The argument dragged on through the night, growing more bitter as they found fresh wrongs to dwell upon.

"In the morning," asserted Mbara, thumping his chest, "I shall go to him and ask for my money. If he does not give it then he must send us home or——"

A shout of approval greeted his words and at dawn with three men at his heels he went up to the house.

Carchot awoke to the sound of his bedroom door being violently thrown open and he was dimly aware of four great Kanakas drawn up at the foot of his cot. They looked neither submissive nor cheerful, in fact they looked positively dangerous, and their leader eschewing all formalities rapped out the one word, "Money!" with enough determination to cause Carchot a certain amount of uneasiness.

He blinked at the spokesman and to gain time said inanely:

"Oh, good morning. *Fait-il beau ce matin?*"

"Money," repeated Mbara.

"Money? Hm," Carchot brushed long locks of hair out of his eyes while he gave the matter full consideration.

"Want now, plenty soon."

"What for?"

"Money or we go."

"Vexatious," Carchot declared in his mother tongue. "Money or you go! Truly, I wish you *would* go, but you would have to swim, and there are sharks, so I am credibly informed."

How could he make them understand that in a few days Brailley—whose name they ignored—would call for them and take them elsewhere? Impossible, of course. Pidgin-English did not lend itself to such abstractions. And he had less than ten francs in cash. Yet he must find some means of placating them.

"You give now?" insisted Mbara, edging around the foot of the bed.

"Stand still!" ordered Carchot. "You work only nine days. Not time for money yet, savvy?"

Mbara shook his head.

"Must have—give—quick."

He stood with extended hands, palms upward, and close behind him, thrusting him forward his companions muttered and grumbled.

Carchot sensed the change that had taken place in the dark minds of the savages, and with breath-taking suddenness he saw in their eyes the age-old, fear-begotten madness that leads to slaughter.

He must do something at once. But do what? How? The sound of a loud-ticking clock filled the room. Its steady, unhurried measure obsessed him, it was so out of tune with the hammering beat of his heart. He could not think because of it. Could not think of a thing. And Mbara was edging in closer, his lips drawn back off his teeth.

"You give?" tirelessly repeated the Kanaka.

That clock! If he could only reach it and smash it! It stood on a dresser at the opposite side of the room facing the bed. A badly made piece of furniture, that dresser. It was warped, all the drawers stuck, particularly the top right-hand one. Never would open properly. And in it beneath the collars there was——

He felt Mbara's hot breath close to his face, he saw Mbara's fingers curve into claws. He tried to retard the inevitable.

"Wait, tomorrow, maybe," he suggested.

"No," snarled the native. He no longer wanted money. He wanted to kill for the sake of killing, to destroy the thing he could not understand and therefore dreaded.

"Very well," said Carchot. "Stand clear. I give money now."

A sigh escaped the Kanakas. They were glad they were at last to become possessors of this marvelous thing—money; but their contempt for the white man increased. He had given way. He was beaten.

"Wait until we see where it is hidden," said Mbara. "Then strike him down. We shall take all he has."

Carchot bent over the dresser tugging at the top right hand drawer. As usual it stuck and had to be pried open an inch at a time.

"In there money?" asked Mbara.

"No savvy," murmured Carchot, a dry sob of excitement in his throat. "Must look-see. Maybe here, maybe not. Wait, I give."

At last the drawer came open. Beneath the collars his hand found what he sought.

"Have got?" inquired Mbara, crouching low, ready to spring.

Carchot slewed around and in his hand he held not money but a revolver. His knees were wobbling abominably and the words of command he wanted to fling at the natives came from his lips in a thin, high whisper.

"If you move," he stammered. "If you move——"

Mbara laughed at him.

"See," he cried to his mates. "See him tremble! He would frighten me with that little thing."

He drew himself up, thumping his chest, towering above the shaken white man, and again he laughed.

As he laughed he sprang, and a bullet fired at point-blank range crushed his skull.

The sound of the shot steadied Carchot's nerves. The mist before his eyes cleared away, his teeth set tight and his knees grew firm. Once again he fired. The two survivors retreated, yelling as they sped from the house.

In his haste for vengeance Carchot pursued them, firing as he ran, but the bullets flew wide of their mark and he drew up when he became aware that the hammer of the revolver was clicking against spent cartridges.

He retraced his steps, frowning nervously. Oblivious of the sprawling bodies he ransacked the dresser for a fresh supply of ammunition. Slowly at first, then with more hurried, jerky movements he explored drawer after drawer strewing their contents all over the floor.

From the laborers' huts there came a great outcry, a long-drawn, swelling roar that sent a chill creeping down his spine.

"I thought it was here," he muttered. "I put it with the gun. I know I did—and it is gone!"

He paused, his arms hanging limply at his sides, while the clamor rang in his ears. He smiled bitterly.

"*Tu es fichu, mon bonhomme,*" he said aloud. "It is too late to search elsewhere now."

He became a hunted animal, stooping low as he ran from room to room seeking cover. From a window he saw the laborers, men and women, roll like a tide toward him. Nothing could check them. They drove straight on, bursting through fence and hedge and above their heads in the sunlight glinted the machetes they had stolen from the tool-shed.

The house offered no protection, no hiding-place. And he did not want to die like a cornered rat. Out in the open; perhaps he might escape, reach the hills.

But the road to the hills was blocked by the Kanakas and he was obliged to flee out the front way, toward the sea. Crawling flat to the ground he wormed his way along beneath low shrubs lining the path to the beach. Too late he realized that the shelter of the bushes ceased abruptly just clear of the sands and neither to the right nor to the left was there a stick or a stone that he might hide behind. The coconut-trees were gone, chopped down and burned, even their roots had been hacked out of the loose soil.

Immeasurably distant to the left there was a clump of pandanus-trees reaching to the water's edge; beyond lay thick jungle and shelter, but it was out of reach. To the right, still more remote, there was a low, rocky promontory where the beach ended. Under its lee the tide had heaped up a great flat bank of sand that jutted out yellow and hot into the blue of the sea. On the far side of the promontory a stream poured its silt-laden water into the ocean, and there there were dense undergrowth and swamps whose oozy bypaths Carchot knew as well as he knew his own fields. But the intervening sand-bank, shelterless, glaring, naked beneath the sun, was a barrier he dare not face.

The Kanakas had reached the house and poured through it yelling, smashing, destroying. Their cries dwindled away while they ransacked the place for its owner, quartering forth and back dismayed by his disappearance. They were leaderless, a jostling mob, primitive, cruel, swayed by one single purpose—the exulting greed of the tracker in full cry on the trail of his prey.

When they failed to find him the shouts broke out afresh. They swarmed even over the roof-top and Carchot, crouching beneath the bushes, saw them tear away the dry palm-leaves in great handfuls and throw them to the winds. Here was something they could destroy that belonged to the man they sought.

Carchot knew that he must soon be found. He gave way, whimpering with tears of self-pity:

"I can't stand it! What can I do? Oh, what can I do?"

And he groveled with his head bowed to the ground, his face buried in his hands.

The mood changed. He cursed his heavy body and the softness of his muscles, swearing huskily until he became aware of a torturing thirst. He must have water at any price. He remembered the stream, over there beyond the sand-bank, beyond the rocks, a full half-mile away.

From the house came a sudden burst of wild shouts. Some one had set the torn thatch-palms alight. They were burning like tinder. The house itself caught fire and roared up in one great gust of smoke. Fascinated, the natives watched the blaze, howling with delight when the roof began to sag.

Carchot was on his knees, still undecided.

"Go—run!" he told himself. "It is your one chance. Go on!"

He struggled to his feet, for a second hesitated, and then lumbered off running with head thrown back and elbows flapping, running for his life—a podgy, ungainly figure plowing through the clinging sand.

He covered fifty, a hundred, two hundred yards. Then he was nearly half-way to shelter.

A great ululation broke out behind him. Over his shoulder he saw the Kanakas come racing in his tracks.

On he went beneath the scorching sun. He ran more slowly, more heavily, with half-closed eyes and mouth contorted. Each sobbing breath he drew stabbed through his lungs like a molten shaft of pain, and the sun beating down on his bare head was a canopy of fire.

He covered another fifty yards, and his pace grew slower still. The sand sucked at his feet. As in a nightmare he seemed to be held fast to one spot though he ran and ran, raising his knees high at each step.

He fell, rolled over, clawed his way along on all fours, regained his feet and went on.

Ahead he could make out the crevices between the rocks not a stone's throw away now, and behind were his pursuers drawing ever closer.

The sand grew firmer, harder. He cast one last look over his shoulder—a hidden boulder tripped him and he pitched headlong and lay still, too weary to move.

AS THERE is good reason to believe that the ways of God surpass all understanding, so do the motives of collectors of ethnological specimens. They scour the waste places of the earth, suffering great hardships the while, and weep tears of perfect joy at the sight of some stained and battered kava bowl found by chance among the rafters of a cannibal's hut.

These collectors are selfless enthusiasts working in the outer darkness, and their one ultimate reward is the sight of museum shelves well-stocked with their trophies for the delectation of family groups scraping their uncomprehending way of a Saturday afternoon down echoing vistas of hardwood floors.

The overlord of the collector is technically known as a curator. He usually has his being in a remote corner of a vast museum and his knowledge of kava bowls is profound. More often than not he has the use of an excellent armchair, a modern desk and other efficiencies. From the depths of his chair he dictates gay letters to his myrmidons asking them to perform miracles of endurance and courage. He can afford to be gay—he is comfortable. But he frequently has the decency in a postscript to express the hope that the collector is well—in other words, still alive, which is the least he can do.

One such letter from just such a curator reached Miss Cally Gordon, and was handed to her by the skipper of the mail-boat which should have carried her to Sydney on the first stage of her homeward journey. She had spent three hard months in the uplands of San Cristoval and her bulging packing-cases were proof that she had collected more tangible trophies than break-bone fever.

She forgot the letter until she stood on the beach at Bwauro ready to embark. Then, as an afterthought, she read it.

It began most cheerfully, lauding her successes, thanking her for her efforts, wondering at her endurance. There followed bright bits of small talk gleaned at random among the show-cases and concluded:

> "By the way, I nearly forgot to mention that our correspondent on Rapanga, Mons. Hector Carchot has given no sign of life for a year or more. You remember his account of the ceremonial belts worn by the women of his island? Astonishingly good, wasn't it? But he omitted to send along an exemplar of the *tamate timorin* which we *must* have if our collection is to be really complete. Such things are vanishing with lamentable rapidity. My last two letters have remained unanswered. Will you, whilst in the neighborhood, look up Mons. Carchot and, so to speak, urge him to fresh efforts on our behalf? You might even be able to bring home a *tamate timorin* belt *with you*.
>
> "Are you taking good care of your health? Don't overexert yourself; take things easily. Life in the tropics—" etc.

Miss Gordon carefully folded the letter and slipped it into the pocket of her threadbare coat. She turned to the skipper who stood by the ship's cutter waiting for her to embark, and inquired—

"How far is it to Rapanga, Captain Mathers?"

"Southern New Hebrides?" grinned the seaman, jerking his thumb over his shoulder. " 'bout five days. But we're going to Sydney. All ready, lady?"

"No, I am going to Rapanga."

"I see. Well, come along out of the sun," suggested Captain Mathers, an unmarried man with little knowledge of the weaker sex's stamina. "I'll tell you all about Rapanga when we get on board. It's——"

"You'll take my boxes to Sydney," cut in Miss Gordon, "and leave them with my agents. I'll keep that suitcase. That's all I shall need."

"Now, just listen——"

"Don't wait for me any longer. Sorry to have delayed you."

The skipper was very kind.

"Lady," he declared, "this is San Cristoval. It's five hundred miles to the Hebrides. Five hundred, see? It can't be done. All ready now?"

"It can be done," said Miss Gordon. "Throw out that suitcase."

For the first time the burly mariner studied her with more than passing interest. He perceived a strong, angular, mature woman dressed in a suit of heavy linen that sacrificed style to comfort. The coat was baggy and its pockets were laden with unladylike articles such as a small revolver, matches, pencil stubs, a compass and string. Beneath the short skirt appeared uncompromisingly large heavy-soled boots.

Her skin was weather-beaten and brown, adding emphasis to the shrewdness of her eyes and the boldness of her nose which was long and straight and narrow at the nostrils. Her thin lips showed a tendency to curl up at the corners into a chilly smile and her chin was round, firm and dimpleless.

The skipper's scrutiny came to an end when it reached her eyes. He made no further reference to the strength of the sun, personally retrieved her suitcase, and left Bwauro beach with a feeling of intense relief. Such women were not to his fancy. He found their strength of character indecent, positively indecent. Like many other manly men he wanted to do all the bullying.

Inter-island communication in Melanesia lacks all comfort and follows no accepted routes. A magistrate, a missionary and a very drunken trader all helped Miss Gordon on her way. But the trader developed delirium tremens when he reached Aurora and she was obliged to leave him hurriedly. She found herself in a Kanaka village where, fortunately, there lived a native teacher of the Gospels, a kindly, obliging man.

He knew of Rapanga; he would take her there, he said, and leading her to the bank of a shallow creek he showed her the latest thing in self-propelled outrigger canoes; a hollowed-out tree-trunk, long and very narrow with—oh, splendor!—a detachable marine motor lashed to the stern. According to the teacher's enthusiastic praise the engine could do everything except sit up and beg—it was probably too well-bred to beg—and Miss Gordon believed him because she was in a hurry.

They left Aurora at dusk, gliding smoothly over an oily sea. The journey was uncomfortable and eventless, the engine behaved as all good engines should and the native teacher was tactful enough to shut up when Miss Gordon decided to sleep. At dawn when she awoke Rapanga lay dead ahead, its peaks all aglow in the light of the rising sun. Lush and sparkling, green to the water's edge it might have been a fairyland conjured overnight out of the sea, and the outer barrier where the long rollers thundered as they burst in foam seemed to guard it impregnably.

Miss Gordon stretched her aching limbs and sat up. She put on her hat, which she had used as a pillow; her toilet was complete. At once she was wide awake and ready to take an interest in current events.

"Have you been here before?" she demanded after one look at the boiling surf.

"Yes," said the guide, smiling seraphically. "We come quick, eh? Hand of Lord He guide us over bosom of deep sea."

"Where is the pass?"

"Ah!" A long pause. "We find it soon."

"You know where Mr. Carchot's house is?"

"I see him once, yes." The native brightened up. "Over there, behind little hill."

He omitted to mention that he had seen the place only from the deck of a mission steamer, and he knew no more about the pass nor where it was to be found than did his passenger.

"You are sure you know how to get inside?" she demanded again, turning around that she might see his face more plainly.

"I know," he affirmed, and because he did not like the doubt in her eyes he became very flustered.

He would show this distrustful woman that he was not only preacher but seaman. This barrier reef was a mere ripple compared to the booming surf of his native Maré. He could cross it anywhere. The hand of the Lord would guide him.

They came abreast of a spot where the green waters rushed and swirled through a narrow break in the coral banks. He turned the canoe shorewards, picked up his emergency paddle and waited for the auspicious moment. It came, and on the crest of a hurtling wave they rushed in—to destruction.

In the narrow trough the wave seemed to be sucked down, down and down, though still traveling at tremendous speed. There came a grinding, splintering sound and a jagged rock, sharp as a knife ripped a two-foot hole in the keel.

Broadside on, all but an inch of the washstreak submerged the canoe swept into smooth water. But the strain had been too great. The boom lashings gave way, disintegrated, the canoe rolled over sluggishly and Miss Gordon, spluttering more with wrath than fear found herself afloat, much hampered by her dress which ballooned gigantically all about her.

She called the Kanaka a fool, which was not an exaggeration, but he was past insulting.

"My motah!" he wailed, clawing at the upturned canoe. "My motah—she stop—my motah!"

"I am not a fish," snapped Miss Gordon, trying to tread water, keep her hair out of her eyes and her dress down, all at the same time. "I am going to swim ashore. When you are through sniveling meet me at Mr. Carchot's."

Over the shattered keel he looked at her sadly.

"I push it along," he mourned. "I meet you. Must save motah."

Luckily her reply was inaudible. She made for land, her unconquered dress and bobbing head giving her the appearance of an enraged turtle. Her feet at last touched ground and as she waded out of the shallow water she heard from across the rocky ledge to her left a faint sound of shouting. Looking up she saw a cloud of smoke billowing up against the blue sky. The shouts became a sustained roar, growing louder and louder.

"Now what?" she asked herself testily, and hampered by her sodden clothes she clambered up over the rocks.

Peering over the summit she allowed herself to whistle long and low, a most unseemly expression of astonishment.

Lumbering toward her staggered a white man dragging leaden feet through the sand and behind him swiftly raced a clamorous pack, drawing closer at each step.

"The reception committee, I presume," said Miss Gordon, blowing down the barrel of her revolver which she drew from its water-proof case. "That must be the expert in ceremonial belts heading the procession."

He fell, clawed his way forward on hands and knees—a wild shout burst from his pursuers, not fifty feet behind him. He was up again, running more easily. She could see his staring eyes and the black hole of his open mouth.

"He'll make it," she thought. "I'll wait."

Then he fell again and lay sprawling, utterly exhausted.

She took careful aim, resting the barrel of her revolver on a boulder. In quick succession she fired three times and each shot brought its man down.

"Get up here, quick!" she called out.

The Kanakas had drawn up, quivering, all bunched together. One of them, more intrepid than his mates, leaped forward—a bullet smashing his thigh brought him down screaming. The others surged back, conquered momentarily by this unseen power.

"Will you get up here?" shouted Miss Gordon. "Get up at once, Carchot!"

He answered to the sound of his name, blindly, automatically, as a very tired child might have done, crawling up from rock shelf to rock shelf with the slow deliberateness of exhaustion.

Still the Kanakas wavered, watching him in silence, afraid of the hidden killer.

Miss Gordon spurred him on.

"Nearly over now. Keep going. Keep going. Don't stop. Careful over that boulder."

He was crying weakly, miserably, as he reached the crest, too spent to notice his rescuer.

She pulled him over beside her, never taking her eyes off the throng below.

"Good for you!" she began, then broke off with an exclamation of dismay.

Drifting with the current the native teacher and his upturned canoe had been swept past the point of the promontory only to be stranded on the sand-bar. He had dragged his craft clear of the water and stood spell-bound watching the Kanakas.

Miss Gordon was on her feet, shouting: "This way! Run!"

But her words were smothered by the yell of the natives. Here was a man sprung from nowhere, out of the sea. He must be the dealer of death. Their fear vanished, they rushed him and he went down beneath their trampling feet.

White to the lips Miss Gordon ducked out of sight. Carchot still lay where he had fallen, sprawling over the rocks. She shook him none too gently and to cover her horror of what she had seen she snapped:

"Stop blubbering! Pull yourself together at once."

He refused to move.

"They'll be after us in about one minute."

She shook him again roughly.

"Where can we go? Where can we hide? Oh, wake up!"

A gust of sound came from the mob beyond the ridge.

Carchot shivered.

"They will find us—here or elsewhere," he muttered listlessly. "It is too late."

She knelt beside him and as she spoke tapped the barrel of her revolver in the palm of her hand.

"I don't know what has happened," she declared, "but I do know this: I am not going to be caught here just because you don't want to move. Will you come or shall I have to drag you? Don't you know how to treat a lady when you meet one?"

He looked at her and blank astonishment spread over his countenance. His mouth opened and closed. He smiled idiotically, staring at her soppy hat whose brim hung down about her ears. Water still oozed from beneath the crown and trickled down over her cheeks where wisps of black hair clung damply.

"Madame is all wet," he stuttered at last. "Madame will catch cold."

He heaved himself to his feet, still in a daze, but overcome by a desire to be polite, above all things polite.

"It is unfortunate," he began.

"Down!" wailed Miss Gordon, dragging at his arm. "Get down!"

But the Kanakas had spied his head jutting above the skyline and in a second the man-hunt was on anew. A hail of stones rattling among the rocks galvanized Carchot into action.

"Come, make haste," he rasped as if Miss Gordon alone were holding them back, and he led the way down the slope, sliding awkwardly from ledge to ledge.

As they reached level ground and raced

over the sands the first of their pursuers topped the crest, baying full-chorus, eager for more blood.

The sand changed to soft mud, they waded breast-high across a stream, tore their way through the shrubs on the opposite bank and struck inland. The jungle closed in about them, thick and dark and hot.

They went ahead struggling through green slime, clinging for support to the projecting roots of trees. A cloud of mosquitoes danced above their heads, thorns tore through their clothing and creepers clutched at them with a thousand tentacles. Filthy and bleeding they fought their way onward a foot at a time.

Behind them the cries receded, grew faint and, at last, died away. A heavy stillness settled over the jungle.

"It is all over," breathed Carchot, standing knee-deep in the mud. "They are afraid of this *marécage*. They do not know the tracks."

"So this is a track," panted Miss Gordon. "I thought we were lost."

"With me you are perfectly safe," he explained soothingly. "And the snakes are not venomous."

"That's good, but I shall be much happier when I feel something solid beneath my feet."

He lied bravely:

"Of course, that is true. It is not far now."

Just before dusk, so exhausted that they no longer raised a hand to protect their faces against the mosquitoes they reached hard ground and crawled painfully to the base of a great tree where they collapsed side by side.

"What do we do now?" inquired Miss Gordon as the wan light filtering through the trees gave way to darkness.

"Ah, Madame," Carchot's voice came out of the gloom. "I wish, too, that I knew!"

"How comforting," sighed Miss Gordon.

They fell asleep almost in the same second and the mosquitoes all through the night feasted undisturbed.

THEY called their village Vungari Umburu, the home of terrible men. It was composed of twenty huts strung out haphazard in a narrow valley at the foot of a brawling waterfall. Other dwellings there were scattered in twos and threes through the hills, but Vungari Umburu was the great gathering-place of the tribe, second to none in importance, not even to the white man's many houses down in the flat lands by the sea.

Here lived Iramutu, the headman, obese and merry, sometimes terrible, and his half-dozen wives. Near by were the gardens and the pig-pens which gave the village such an air of prosperity. Shade trees tempered the heat of the sun, the stream harbored succulent eels, the densely forested mountain-sides were not only pleasing to behold but a protection against the devastation of torrential rains. In fine, the villagers had every reason to be happy. But they were not. Their days were drab and colorless, devoid of all interest. They no longer lived, they merely existed.

Once upon a time, not so many years gone by, they had been privileged to make war against their lowland neighbors, raiding them upon certain occasions to the end that their young men might be blooded and homage paid to the spirits of the dead.

But the white man had taken exception to such well-established practises. He had induced the coastal people to work for him and in the pursuit of wealth they had grown lazy, valuing more highly a suit of verminous clothes than the head of an enemy.

There had been one last memorable raid, a magnificent slaughter of unarmed men and a burning of valuable stores of coir and copra. Punishment had followed now swiftly but none the less surely. Many men armed with rifles had come to the island. They had invaded the mountain passes and instilled in the mind of Iramutu a wholesome dread of tampering with an alien's property.

Thereafter peace had reigned over Rapanga. The hillsmen discovered that the white settler would trade a bottle of rum for ten sacks of dried cocoanut meats and they worked whenever they felt a craving for strong drink, which was often. Hardly, however, had this become a settled practise but the order of things changed again. Iramutu returned hastily from a visit to the coast declaring that an invisible host of devils had attacked the dwellers of the lowlands. He had seen his former enemies dying in scores and he was extremely frightened, so frightened that he forbade any of his people to leave the safety of the hills.

But he became thirstier and thirstier, so parched that at last he cast aside all superstitious dreads and sent three young men down to the coast with instructions not to come back without a large number of bottles.

Of the three one crawled home forty-eight hours later with a broken left arm and a raw gash running from his neck half-way down his back.

"We were trapped," he moaned. "There was a great fire. We saw it from a distance but went on, thinking nothing of it."

"Where are the others—Ngorodi and Neriwa?" demanded the headman.

"Both dead. We were caught as we came close to the fire."

"The white man ordered——?"

"Who knows! I did not see him. All at once numberless men burst upon us, great men, enormous, such as I have never seen before. They caught Ngorodi and crushed him. One stroke of a knife severed Neriwa's head. I escaped after striking down three—four—I do not know how many who stood in my path."

"A knife killed Neriwa?" asked Iramutu, leaning forward, his elbows resting on his knees.

"*Aie!* Many had knives."

"Then they must have been working for the white man. He alone owns such weapons."

The villagers began to growl, but Iramutu cursed them into silence. His little eyes, embedded in fat, gleamed brightly, his face was twisted with rage, but he spoke softly—

"These were new men, you say?"

"New men, tall like trees—and strong! It was surely a trap. We could not take our eyes off the fire, we looked neither to right nor to left, and they leaped out at us——"

"*Kah!* This we have heard before."

Iramutu heaved himself to his feet and addressed the sullen gathering—

"The white man brought these great beings from the depths beyond the rim of the sea. Who are they? I think they are the very demons who destroyed the people of the coast. Their work is done, they have assumed visible shapes."

"Why should they be turned against us?" clamored a voice.

"As a sore on a body spreads," explained Iramutu. "They have tasted blood, and the white man, whose creatures they are, turns them against us to appease their growing hunger."

A wail arose. Again Iramutu silenced them.

"Once," he sneered, "you were terrible warriors, unafraid. Now your shrieks drown those of the women."

"What can we do against such fiends?" choked the wounded man. "If they come——"

"Do? Spear them straight through the chest or club them on the skull. They have bodies like ours."

"Bigger——"

"Perhaps, but bodies that can be touched and felt. You say you struck down three of them?"

"That is so."

"Tonight—" Iramutu slapped his belly—"I shall go down to the flat lands. Four men go with me. We shall creep unseen until we find one of these beings. We shall capture him and bring him back. At leisure we shall see if his body is like ours, inside and out. If it is, then—" he brought down his fist with a sweep—"we shall take payment for those who died. Not even the white man shall escape."

When darkness fell the raiders left the valley. Up over the hills where the winds blew fresh, down rugged paths they hurried without sound. They came to the plain and vanished in the thick jungle darkness. Beyond lay the incult fields and beyond these the sea. Beneath a clump of trees close to the water's edge slept the exiles. The fires they had kindled were dying down, but the faint red glow of the embers guided Iramutu from afar.

He struck like lightning, and like a flash was gone, leaving terror in his wake. One man was missing from his place by the fire, another lay pinned by a spear to the ground.

Back in the hills at dawn the captive lay before Iramutu's hut. His jaw was broken and his back where he had been dragged along the ground was a great open wound, but he was alive.

"This is no fiend," the headman told his people. "He is like us, but not as strong as we are. Hear him moan, hear him cry! He feels pain as we do. Listen!"

He took a long scraper made of shell from his waist-cloth and bent over the prisoner. The man's moan rose until it became a great gurgling howl of pain.

"You see," said Iramutu, pointing to his handiwork. "It is flesh, like mine. Listen again!"

At high noon the captive died.

With his foot Iramutu stirred the mangled body. It rolled over stiffly, awkwardly, and a smile spread over the headman's countenance, a grim, chilly smile.

There was iron in his voice when he spoke.

"That," he said, "was a man, no more than a man. Will you believe now, you cowards? That white man is to blame. He brought this breed to our land. What have we done to him? What?"

The people muttered uneasily. They had been called cowards. Cowards! Were they not the men of Vungari Umburu? It was hard to understand.

"Too long we have let this white man make our laws," went on Iramutu. "He sucked the lives of the lowland folk. They are gone. Now comes our turn. Will you submit?"

"What can we do?" shouted a warrior. "We wait for the word!"

And the people took up the cry—

"We wait, Iramutu, we wait!"

He grew rigid, his eyes rolled up in their sockets, foam appeared on his lips, he dropped to the ground where his whole body was shaken by violent spasms.

Frenzy took hold of the onlookers. They fell to their knees and covered their faces with their hands, for they knew that Iramutu was in communion with the gods. Their prayers arose deafening, and the women, hysterical with horror of the unknown, fled screaming to their huts.

Iramutu came out of the trance. He stood swaying drunkenly and said little above a whisper:

"Pudua, my father, came to me from the land of the dead. His hair and beard were long in sign of mourning. In his right hand he trailed a broken spear, and his left hand was extended as if asking for gifts. He spoke to me, saying:

" 'The skies are dark and the path is blind—go warily. But if you must kill be swift!'

"Then he vanished."

Iramutu paused, scowling at the warriors, and they shuddered at the sight of his twitching face. All at once he thundered at them:

"Go fetch that white man. Bring him here! Pudua's spear was broken—we may fail, but he demands an offering. We must make it. That is the word!"

The answering shout crashed and echoed down the valley. The fever spread even to the aged and the sick, and one old man, a leper with a silvery mask instead of a face, arising like some fantom of a long-forgotten past in the midst of the roaring crowd, wept silently as he raised his shriveled arms heavenward in sign of rejoicing. And the tears ran out of his sightless eyes into the shapeless thing which, once, had been a mouth.

"YOU arrived at an inopportune moment," declared Carchot, flat on his back among the ferns. "A week earlier you would have put me to shame, a week later I should have been dead. Your presence accentuates my futility."

"When I first sighted you," rejoined Miss Gordon, tramping up and down in the clearing, "you did not appear very anxious to die. In fact you were running away, if I remember rightly."

"Madame's memory for detail is extraordinary. It is quite true. *Et que voulez-vous?* One clings to life as a child clings to the green apple that makes it sick. It is sour, it is hard, it's flavor is abominable—one wants to throw it away but one can not. The only remedy is overeating, which produces indigestion, which, if one is very fortunate, brings death."

"Or merely an acute pain. Your outlook is warped. And, speaking of apples, I want to eat."

"Again, madame! We ate early this morning. Have you forgotten? Bread-fruit, clear water, more bread-fruit——"

"And in your estimation, how long is this to last?"

"Indefinitely, madame, indefinitely."

He waved a grimy hand above his head, a wide gesture denoting his complete detachment.

"Our helplessness is absolute. The sea is closed to us by our friends the Malaita cannibals and, at all events, there is no boat due to call for another three months. Brailley might return, but I doubt it. In the hills, as I have explained, there is a tribe known as the Vungari——"

"Why couldn't you——"

"They are nationalists of the most rabid." Carchot grinned beneath his ragged beard.

"Never have I been permitted to visit their village. They hold it sacred."

"And you allowed them to dictate to you?"

She glared at him as she tramped by.

"I respected their rights. I kept them out of my house, they kept me from theirs. And, you know, *entre nous*, I never had any real reason to call on them."

"Then how did you obtain the belts you sent us."

"Rum," grumpily admitted Carchot. "Iramutu, the headman, brought down his dancers. They performed for me. In those days I felt like a pasha. Today I am content to feel hungry."

"Very well, if you won't come with me, I'm going alone. Until a boat calls I shall stay in the hills."

Carchot sat up, his fingers locked about his knees.

"It is very risky," he observed. "Iramutu told me——"

"Is there a single thing you aren't afraid of?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It is death to go up there," he explained. "Here we are moderately safe."

"And safety is all you want, is it? You are content to creep about in the jungle like a beast until some one finds out that you are missing. Then you'll drop everything and get out—beaten by a crowd of savages!"

Very slowly a flush spread over his countenance and his eyes avoided hers.

"I must think of you," he muttered.

"Nothing of the kind. I've watched you for two days. You're too weak and indolent and selfish to think of anybody but yourself. The trouble with you is that you've never had to fight. You've grown soft. You don't want to live, you don't want to die. You can find excuses, I'll grant you that. Every forger, every thief has an excuse and a good one, too. And you're a forger—you're deceiving yourself. You've played with words and laughed at your own laziness. What's going to become of you? Going to turn beachcomber like the filthy things you see on the Vila waterfront? Is that your ambition?"

Carchot listened in silence, his head sunk down between his shoulders, his mouth all puffy and sagging at the corners.

She had no right to insult him. He stole a glance at her. The skirt all stiff with dirt, the amorphous boots, the shrunken coat sleeves that left exposed her broad, suntanned wrists. Her face, scratched by thorns was repellent. There was that beak of a nose and the sneering mouth and the prominent jaw-line sharpened by hunger. He forgot that she had saved him, and hated her.

To drown his misery, because he knew that she spoke the truth, he sneered at her.

"And what is it to you? Don't be so interested in my regeneration, *mademoiselle*. Gratitude, with me, is not a substitute for —for something else. I am not the type of man who marries his nurse."

"You cad!" she flung at him.

He grinned, pleased to see her suffer. But he shrank back when she stopped before him with blazing eyes, and said quite gently:

"I have two bullets left. I am going to waste one of them if you don't take that back at once. Yes or no?"

The revolver was in her hand, its muzzle not three feet from Carchot's head, and her trigger finger was taut.

"You would shoot—really?" he asked, dumfounded.

"I am *going* to shoot," she corrected.

His hatred vanished as swiftly as it had arisen. He was ashamed at the contrast between his own infirmity and her strength.

"Forgive me," he begged, "I did not mean it."

Still she kept the weapon leveled at his head and there was a grimness about her mouth that frightened him. Would she kill him after all, he wondered? Women did queer things sometimes—and there was no accounting for this one.

"I have made excuses," he protested. "The words slipped out. *Je suis confus*. Won't you accept——"

"Get up," ordered Miss Gordon. "I should have thought of this sooner. Now my mind is made up."

"And my mind, too?" he inquired dubiously.

"And yours too. We are going up to the inland village you spoke of."

"But——"

"I mean it. Get up. This has lasted long enough."

He scrambled to his feet, protesting with a trace of bitterness:

"It is absurd. I know this island."

"That's why I tolerate you—because you

know the island. Once you did good work. Took an interest in people and things. That's the *you* I'd gladly help. Don't flatter yourself, just at present you're nasty-minded and disgusting. Don't stand there sneering. You're not the first man I've had to deal with. Get on!"

"Madame," he said, suddenly calm, "you are a lunatic, a ferocious lunatic, but I admire you. I cannot help it. I do not even understand it. You may keep both bullets. We now pass from masterly inactivity to action of the most insane."

His shirt hung in strips, one whole sleeve was missing; the knees of his trousers were no more; on one foot he wore a shoe, on the other a rope sandal. His sun-bleached hair was wild and his beard had that unkempt look peculiar to hedgerows in March, yet Miss Gordon was aware that his whole bearing had subtly changed. All at once he was a D'Artagnan disguised as an overfat scarecrow.

When, for the first time in their brief acquaintance, Miss Gordon smiled at him, he bowed and exclaimed theatrically—

"Those who are about to die salute thee, Caesar!"

Then reverting to his normal tone, he added casually, as an afterthought—

"But that is no reason why you should commit suicide."

Helplessly he shrugged his shoulders and led the way out of the gully where for two days they had hidden.

Soon they were climbing a steep hillside, following a ravine whose bush-grown banks afforded some measure of protection from the glare of the sun. The ravine grew shallower, the bushes less dense. Far away beneath them they could see the sharp corners of Carchot's fields, like a wedge thrust into the jungle, and the black patch of charred wood that had been his home.

He thought:

"She is a magnificent woman. Such courage! And what eyes! Not soft—no. An eagle's. Perhaps she is right, one never knows. I have enough money—I could start in again. Iramutu might help us——"

But he dismissed Iramutu from his mind. It was too disquieting to think of that sleek, fat kanaka, with his scream of a laugh and bloodshot eyes.

Up—higher, with the sun burning between his shoulder blades. He was painfully conscious that Miss Gordon was climbing more easily than he. She was not out of breath, she was not tired; where he struggled she moved without difficulty. It was maddening. He was not leading, he was being driven. The idea obsessed him, spurred him on. He longed to do some magnificent thing that would restore his self respect and force her to admire him.

At high noon they reached the knife-edged crest where withered bushes clung to the thin soil among the rocks. The heat rising in shimmering waves from the sun-baked earth was stifling, and the sun at its zenith struck straight down, shadowless and dazzling.

"Over there," pointed Carchot, "where those hills run together, at the foot of the waterfall—that is the village."

"Pretty," commented Miss Gordon, shading her eyes as she peered into the distance. "Yes, I see a roof-top."

"You are not too tired to go on?"

Her lips twitched as she looked at his shining face.

"Not at all," she answered not unkindly. "Let's get it over."

No reference was made to his own physical exhaustion. He was hurt, but very grateful.

They went down among trees whose foliage tempered the heat. They came to a brook where, stretched flat on the ground, they drank greedily, sucking at the rushing water.

Carchot grunted and sighed. He ached exquisitely in every muscle and sinew, he did not want to move another step, but he refused to plead even for a few minutes' grace.

He sat back on his heels and stretched his weary arms above his head.

"Do not drink too much," he said with a show of authority. "It is bad——"

The admonition died away on his lips, his arms fell to his sides, for among the fronds on the opposite side of the stream there had appeared a black, malevolent face topped by a prodigious headgear of feathers and cowrie shells.

"*Faites attention!*" he cried out, trying to drag his companion to her feet.

But the warning was useless. A dozen hillsmen crashed out of the underbrush, leaped the brook and fell upon the defenceless pair. For a brief second Carchot tried to struggle. The forest rang with his yells as he rolled over buried beneath a cluster of oiled black bodies. He shook them off and plunged toward Miss Gordon who had been pinned to the ground. Then something struck him just above the ear and his world went dark.

"MY POOR Brailley," said Lepillier, looking down his nose at the trader, "permit me to tell you that you are infinitely stupid."

"Cuts both ways," grunted Brailley, shuffling uncomfortably on the other side of the desk, hat in hand.

"You were not asked to comment," retorted Lepillier, smoothing his mustache with the tips of his fingers. "Please listen to me."

He settled himself more comfortably in his swivel chair and allowed himself the luxury of a long pause that his victim might writhe at leisure. He was sufficiently important and wealthy to take liberties even with swashbuckling traders. Also there were enough servants within earshot, in case of emergency, to make him feel quite safe, and he insulted Brailley with that bland calmness affected by superior persons the world over.

He was a very superior person indeed. His full name was Raoul Thourgis Montallent de Lepillier, and he was the descendant of barons. He boasted of a family-tree whose roots groped back through the centuries to the time when the first of the line sprang into fame because of his strength and his skilful manipulation of a nail-studded battle-ax. This thug stole a vast estate on the banks of the Garonne River and became the confidant of kings, which made him haughty. Subsequent generations showed marked signs of physical decline but lost nothing of the family's traditional haughtiness.

Came a revolution. The vast estate was confiscated and the Lepilliers, shorn of their titles and prefixes, went to work if they were fortunate enough to escape the guillotine. Even in adversity they retained their glacial aloofness. They were not very popular. They were poor. They were most unhappy, but they were aristocrats and never lost sight of the fact.

They played a gruesome game with others so situated. Foregathering in sixth floor apartments in shabbily genteel neighborhoods they would revert to type and address each other as *Monsieur le Comte*, or *Monsieur le Marquis*, or *Madame la Vicomtesse* to their hearts' content. They referred to their fellow citizens as "*le peuple*," with a sneer. Then they would separate and go back to their little jobs and be quite humble as they sold dry-goods to the wives of the "*peuple*."

Raoul Lepillier forgot the rules of the game. He carried his haughtiness beyond the confines of sixth floor salons and his life was made miserable. Long after he had reached the age of discretion he saw fit to attend a royalist meeting which the police broke up. He was so enraged that he struck a *sergent de ville* over the head with the rolled-gold knob of his Malacca cane. To avoid a scandal, for the policeman's skull was somewhat damaged, Lepillier's friends spirited him out of the country. They beggared themselves that he might escape and he wept haughty tears as the steamer bore him eastward.

In the New Hebrides he found oblivion and wealth.

On Api he became a tropical feudal baron with two hundred black serfs working in his cotton-fields and preparing his coconut-fiber for the world's markets. He condescended to associate with governors, but looked down on his fellow colonists with open contempt. There is no over-crowding in the New Hebrides—when his innate ability to be offensive became known he was left very much alone. He rejoiced, but at times found his isolation inconvenient.

When, for instance, a fresh levy of serfs became necessary for the proper handling of his increased production, he was obliged to be polite to Brailley because he was too busy to go recruiting himself and no other man was available. He ensnared Brailley with wine and sweet words and the trader fell protesting into the trap.

Lepillier's true nature came like a cork to the surface when Brailley returned with a pitiful tale of pursuit by a murderous gunboat and of offloading the Kanakas by night on Rapanga.

"I said you were stupid," he remarked. "I was wrong. You are a fool. Imagine! The gunboat lost sight of you in the night, but you stop and unload! You give my laborers to Catchot!"

"I gave him nothing," retorted Brailley. "And I'm nobody's fool. Norwood boarded my schooner the next day——"

"Norwood?"

"Yes, lieutenant commanding the gunboat. And where'd I be now if I'd kept those Kanakas on board?"

"You are a failure," Lepillier declared wearily. "I have no patience with failures. But I must have those Kanakas."

He inclined his head toward the door.

"Go and get them."

"Not much. I quit. Norwood said——"

"Indeed?" A faint smile played about Lepillier's lips. "Unless you obey at once you receive no money. That is understood, naturally?"

"But listen, Rapanga is only three days' journey from here. There they are—Eighty good niggers, right next door. You could get any of two or three men I know to finish the job—cheap. And I'm to get nothing?"

"Nothing."

"That's not reasonable. Norwood knows darn well I had those niggers on board. You bet I didn't tell him I was coming here, but suppose I do go back d'you think I could get through? You know I couldn't.

"If only you had not made the initial mistake," sighed Lepillier. "Now, I admit, it is difficult. But I must have those Kanakas at once."

A thought flashed through his mind and he suddenly became almost affable.

"If I went with you to Rapanga," he suggested. "My presence——"

"Lot of good that would do. You don't own the schooner."

"One could say——"

"No use, mister. You'd have to change the papers—transfer to the French register to be safe. Norwood's an inquisitive blighter."

Lepillier felt certain that he could hold his own against any gunboat lieutenant, but he decided to humor Brailley.

"And this formality, how is it performed?" he asked.

"Have to go to Vila."

"Ah, of course."

Lepillier clapped his hands and a servant appeared. He ordered bottles and syphons, ice and tumblers. He waved Brailley to a seat. All at once he was a model host, urbane and engagingly friendly.

Brailley's astonishment was so great that he gulped down whisky as if it were water, but his glass stood always full on the broad arm of his chair within easy reach of his hand. His eyes assumed a glassy stare and his speech grew thick. He was very happy.

Toward dusk Lepillier leaned over and shook hands with him, exclaiming:

"Why, here we are at Vila! What a pleasant journey we have had."

Brailley nodded drunkenly.

"Yesh," he admitted, pondering the statement. "Fine trip."

"We are now," said Lepillier, "in the office of my friend the colonial secretary.

"Thash true," agreed Brailley, glancing around at the walls. "Sawful hot."

"We transfer your schooner, the *Grace & Edna* to the French register."

"Quick — sawful quick," admonished Brailley, slowly waggling his head.

"The documents are ready for your signature," briskly went on Lepillier. He thrust a pen between Brailley's fingers and placed the back of an old envelope on the chair arm.

"Sign here!"

Brailley, still protesting that the speed of modern locomotion astonished him, signed with a flourish that broke the pen point.

"And now," concluded Lepillier, "we are going to Rapanga. Finish that drink and *en route!*"

"Not yet. Want visit frenz."

"One more drink?"

"Jus' one," agreed Brailley, and he slid off his chair on to the ground where he snored loudly.

Lepillier ceased to be a model host. He summoned his Javanese butler, prodded the sleeper with the toe of his boot, and snapped:

"Have this drunken pig carried down to the beach. I am going away. Pack my bag."

Shortly after nightfall he boarded the *Grace & Edna*.

"You see your master?" he said to Brailley's half-breed mate. "Drunk and a touch of the sun. I am in charge until he recovers."

"He gave orders?"

"Yes. Go back to Rapanga for those recruits. We leave at once. Be careful to show no lights."

Four days later when the hilltops of Rapanga hove into sight Brailley still lay on his bunk unable to speak or move. Not only was he dead drunk, but he was rapidly approaching the point of complete exhaustion. And Lepillier was to blame.

He had watched at the trader's bedside and whenever the latter showed signs of recovery he thrust more whisky between his lips. For the last twenty-four hours Brailley had had to be strapped down. Now, however, he lay quite still, barely breathing, his face all mottled and gray.

The situation amused Lepillier. He never paused to weigh the consequences of his actions for the simple reason that he foresaw no consequences. He would allow Brailley to recover only when he could confront him with an accomplished fact. One of two things would then happen: Brailley might treat the whole thing as a joke, pocket his money and go away; or he might be offensive and in the latter contingency Lepillier promised himself the pleasure of kicking him on his way for the mere sake of kicking. Under no circumstances could Brailley raise an outcry and demand official justice. He was a blackbirder and an outlaw; an obsolete gunboat was burning valuable fuel and giving employment to thirty odd stokers, seamen and gunnery experts for the sole purpose either of surprizing him in a compromising situation or killing him outright if he refused to be captured. He was therefore quite defenceless against the attacks of men called honest.

When the schooner anchored off Rapanga Lepillier locked the trader in his cabin and prepared to affront Carchot. The beach was deserted. It annoyed him to think that he should have to plod about in search of a host. It was not hospitable it was indecent, he was deeply offended.

"Where is the house?" he asked of the half-breed mate.

"House burned, looks like," gloomily answered the latter, pointing to the blackened remains jutting above the bushes.

"So it seems, but I see some thatched roof-tops just beyond. I shall have to listen to a long tale of this man's misfortunes, I suppose."

All the way ashore his exasperation increased. Not a single soul to meet him! The thought came to him that perhaps Carchot would not willingly part with the recruits. He dismissed the idea as irrelevant, but he wondered vaguely why the place was so desolate. Bearing a rifle in the crook of his arm he stepped out on to the sand. Still nobody in sight. All the coconut-trees cut down, too. That gave the place a queer, empty look.

"Wait for me here," he told the crew of the dingy, and set off briskly toward the gutted remains of the house.

He came to a hedge; beyond it caught sight of a row of low sheds.

"Carchot," he shouted. "Carchot. But where are you then?"

A yell answered him, but it came from the wrong direction, from the beach. He whirled sharply about and stood staring uncomprehendingly.

A compact mass of natives sprung from the shelter of the bushes had swept across the sands cutting in between him and the dingy.

It was unreal, grotesque. In a dream he saw the oar blades rise clear and shining above the heads of the throng and crash down among them. The cries swelled to a great roar. A group of men detached itself from the main body and turned toward him, stooping low as they ran. A stick hurled through the air swished by within inches of his head. Astonishment gave way to wrath. They were attacking *him!* An ambush! The crew of the dingy was being butchered—no help could come from the schooner. This much he knew, but he was not going to give way before these savages. One shot would rout them.

He raised the rifle to his shoulder, aimed deliberately, fired—and missed. A drop of perspiration rolling down his nose clung to his eyelash and momentarily blinded him.

At once he lost confidence in himself and his composure vanished. Leaping the treacherous hedge he bolted across the fields swinging wide of the sheds. Spread out fanwise behind him the Kanakas edged him away from the jungle, kept him in full flight across the open.

It was absurd, incredible, that he Raoul Thourgis Montallent de Lepillier should be running away, galloping fifty paces ahead of filthy savages on a remote New Hebrides island. It was worse than absurd, it was debasing. He spun around and emptied the magazine of his rifle at them. But they were widely scattered; one man collapsed brokenly, the others bayed more loudly as they came on.

Again Lepillier turned his back on them and fled, painfully aware that the distance between him and his pursuers had been reduced by half. The rifle grew intolerably heavy. He considered throwing it away until he remembered that in his pocket he carried an extra clip of cartridges.

Trees and a tangle of underbrush loomed ahead. A narrow track opened before him in the bush. Came a sharp bend. He dropped to his knees behind a fallen tree-trunk and reloaded, snarling at his own clumsy, palzied movements.

The clamor of the Kanakas had died away. They were creeping in upon him, stalking him through the jungle. The dread of uncertainty seized him. He longed to be out in the open again. Out of the shadows his eyes conjured a thousand enemies. He caught sight of a head peering cautiously from a screen of leaves. Shoulders followed the head as the native wormed his way forward. Lepillier was astonished as he noticed the man's painstaking intentness which had banished from his face all trace of cruelty. He died with a bullet between the eyes.

The sound of the shot reverberated beneath the trees. Silence followed, more nerve-racking than ever. A rustle of dry leaves brought Lepillier to his feet quivering. He broke cover, stampeding down the path. The chase was on again and the jungle awoke as the trackers gave tongue.

He was out in the sunshine, climbing from boulder to boulder up a steep hillside before he became aware of the fact. He had gained slightly on his pursuers but he noticed that their numbers had more than doubled.

The rifle at each step became more unwieldy as he dragged it behind him. At the summit he tried to make a stand, rolling down loose stones upon the Kanakas, but they dodged clear of the avalanche and clambered up ever closer.

The test was too great for his endurance, and when he found that his bleeding hands could not hold the rifle steady and that his eyes were blurred, he felt for the first time fear gnawing at his heart.

It sent him scurrying down the opposite slope in headlong flight.

"I SHALL keep the woman—for a while," concluded Iramutu, rubbing the palms of his hands on his thighs. "She looks strong. And you," he purred at Carchot, "are going to pay for the breaking of the law."

"You know the ways of white men," retorted Carchot, swaying forward between his guards. "Have you forgotten how you were punished once before? Kill me if you wish—it will cost you your life and those of half your men. But touch that woman and the whole village will be swept away."

Iramutu shrieked with laughter. He held two prisoners where he had only expected one and he felt sure that he had nothing to fear. Everything was plain to him. When years ago his warriors had raided Carchot's plantation they had regrettably omitted to slay the owner. Obviously the latter had been left in a position to communicate with the men who came from the depths of the netherworld in ships. Now, however, he was helpless. So, too, was the woman. If neither of them could get in touch with their clansmen nobody would come to their aid. It was self-evident; at least Iramutu thought so and he was satisfied to abide by his own judgment.

"Tell me quickly," Miss Gordon called across to Carchot. "What is he shrieking about?"

She stood hemmed in by four Kanakas. Her hat was gone, her hair clung to her cheeks, she showed signs of recent strife, but she was undaunted. Her hands were thrust in the pockets of her coat, her shoulders were squared, she held her chin high.

To Carchot she was magnificent, more, she was beautiful. Looking into her steady eyes he found fresh strength to keep firm his sagging lips and suppress the tremor in his voice.

"He will not believe me," he explained. "He thinks I turned those laborers against him. It is not my fault if everybody has gone mad! Madame comprehends that? I have warned him that if we are killed he will be punished—and he laughs."

"I'm to blame." Her mouth curved into its old, ironical smile. "I wanted to come. It's too bad and I'm very sorry. How's the head?"

"Better—much better," he lied.

"When I have done with you," Iramutu was speaking, "I shall drive your servants into the sea."

"I should reward such a service if I lived to see it," quickly interposed Carchot. "For each man captured—a length of cloth, for every ten a bottle of rum."

"A trap," sneered the Kanaka.

The crowd squatting in a wide semicircle before the chief's hut grew restless.

Why waste words when a single blow would silence the white man? Why waste time when the warriors waited impatiently for the command that would set them free to kill?

They howled:

"Ho! He talks like an old crone. Cut out his tongue!"

Carchot flinched, glancing fearfully over his shoulder at the warriors. They rocked with delight. This was the man they had feared, this bloodstained cringing thing whose eyes were sick with terror! They were angered by the thought that such a puny creature could have held them in check so long.

Miss Gordon's voice reached him sharp and clear above the clamor.

"Stand up, Carchot, —— you! Bluff it out! We haven't begun to fight yet."

Her words steadied him.

"Not begun to fight!" She, at least, when her time came would die unafraid.

"Pay attention!" he called out. "For me there is no hope. I know it. It is too late now to complain and I do not care much. I deserve it. I went to the dogs, this is the result. Only for you I am concerned now. The chief says he will not kill you. You understand? He will not kill you *yet*."

She was listening intently, peering at him over the shoulders of the Kanakas surrounding her.

"You mean——"

"So you must *make* him kill you," he begged. "And at once."

The bellow of the tribesmen made her answer inaudible. Iramutu was on his feet shouting:

"Bring the woman over here, by me. Let her see how we treat such vermin!"

She was seized and dragged to one side. Carchot stood alone facing his tormentors.

"This man is not worthy of a warrior's spear," Iramutu went on. "He has no strength. A child could slay him, and a child shall!"

He paused and his audience fell silent, listening intently.

"Ngio, come here!" he called out.

A boy of eighteen, squat and powerful, shuffled self-consciously out of the crowd. A weak smile was fixed on his thick, moist lips and his arms dangled loosely as he walked. He was the fool, the butt of the tribe; Iramutu's stroke of genius brought wild applause from the gathering. It was a joke that would be handed down from generation to generation—how Ngio, he of little sense, had been picked to kill the white man who for years had ruled the whole island!

Iramutu slapped the boy on the back.

"You want to marry Wandika?" he asked.

Ngio nodded, staring abashed at the ground.

"Yet you know that no man is fit to take a wife until he has honored the ghosts of bygone warriors. How are they honored?"

"By sending them slaves from among our enemies," mumbled Ngio.

"Ho!" chuckled Iramutu. "Your knowledge alone makes you more than half a man. Now finish the task. You see this one with the blood on his beard. Go kill him and you may have Wandika."

"True? Is it true?" insisted Ngio, shaking with excitement. "Without a weapon—must I slay with my bare hands?"

"Yes," said the chief. "Let me see you become a man."

Carchot watched the boy come toward him with outstretched arms. This was to be his finish! At worst he had expected a quick stab in the back, and he was thrown as a plaything to a fool!

It maddened him. He stood motionless until Ngio's groping hands were within reach of his throat, then he swayed out of reach, whirled around and sent his foot crashing into the native's stomach. *La savatte!* He had not forgotten that!

But his head ached intolerably. The sudden strain reopened his wound and he felt blood trickle warmly down his cheek. The earth seemed to rock beneath him, there was a thunderous roll in his ears. Through a thickening mist he saw Ngio scramble up and rush. Again he tried to use his foot, but there was no strength in him. The Kanaka caught hold of his ankle. He tottered, arms outstretched beating the air.

Then Miss Gordon, forgetting her own plight, wasted one of her two remaining bullets. She fired from her pocket. Ngio stared at her, his little eyes slowly dilating. His grip on Carchot's leg relaxed, his hands fell to his sides. A gurgle came from his lips; it ended in a gush of red foam and he died sprawling beside Carchot who had fainted.

Before a single native could overcome his astonishment Miss Gordon sprang clear of her guards. She jammed the muzzle of her revolver against the chief's broad back.

"Don't you move," she ordered. "Not an inch."

He stood perfectly still, for though he could not understand her words there was no mistaking the threat.

"Be quiet," he commanded, "until I am rid of this wasp. Let no one move."

Silence fell over the gathering, an uneasy expectant hush. A minute crept by. Carchot, his hand pressed tightly to his head, staggered to his feet.

All at once Iramutu stiffened, for out of the stillness there had drifted a cry, far away, echoing faintly up the valley. It ceased, swelled again, grew clearer.

"Carchot—quick!" urged Miss Gordon. "Do you hear that? Quick! Answer me!"

He nodded, still unable to speak.

"They're coming after us—those laborers of yours. Make this man understand. You've got to."

He fought desperately against an almost overpowering desire for sleep.

"Iramutu," he said thickly. "I offered you a reward for every man you would capture. You thought I lied, but the offer stands. Now they are coming——"

A shout of terror broke from the throng. They had caught sight of a man running toward them beneath the trees. A white man! They waited for no more. Others must be close behind him, they felt sure. The village would be wiped out. Panic seized them, they scattered to right and left, vanishing beneath the undergrowth. Alone Iramutu stood motionless. He dare not move for the gun-muzzle still pressed against his spine, and he feared this woman as he had never feared any man.

Carchot shielding his eyes with his hand gazed at the swiftly moving figure.

"Why," he burst out, "It is Lepillier! Lepillier! He has found us! We are safe—safe!"

The crisis was past. His worn out nerves gave way and he wept shamelessly, even while he laughed.

"Who did you say it was?" Miss Gordon's unemotional voice came from behind Iramutu's back.

But Carchot ignored her completely. With arms outflung in sign of welcome he tottered across the clearing to greet their deliverer.

The mystery which surrounds unknown dwellings, even empty ones, brought Lepillier's pursuers to a halt. The village looked too quiet and deserted to be really as peaceful as it seemed. Moreover, the long chase had exhausted them, they were in no condition to face a surprize attack, or, in fact, an attack of any kind. So they turned back, crawling stealthily away. And there were pessimists among them who declared that their whole conduct since reaching the island had been foolhardy in the extreme, and punishable according to the white man's code. The empty village where their quarry had disappeared struck them as a bad omen. Not unlike many more progressive peoples their first sense of guilt followed their first reverse.

But Lepillier was in complete ignorance of this new development. As he tottered up to Carchot his first words were:

"Save me! Carchot, I am finished! They are close behind me. Save me!"

Carchot stared at him blankly, swaying forward at the hips, and replied after his mouth had hung open for a moment—

"Will they be here soon?"

"Soon!" Lepillier choked, his lungs bursting. "They are at my heels. My ——!" he exclaimed, startled, "Have you no gun?"

"It's all right now," persisted Carchot, trying to make himself believe that Lepillier was out of his mind, and miserably failing. "They ran away when they saw you coming. You reached us just in time. A minute later and we should have been dead."

"Ah!" gasped Lepillier, at a loss for words.

"Of course," Carchot went on, "they may come back—even though we hold their chief. They might risk it, one never knows, I hope your men won't be long."

Aghast, Lepillier stammered:

"But I am alone. I was attacked. Do you not understand? Alone—attacked. It is terrible!"

"Yes," admitted Carchot, "it is terrible, but I understand nothing."

"When you have quite done kissing each other," Miss Gordon's voice cleaved through the fog of doubt, "will somebody be kind enough to relieve me? My arm is tired."

It dawned upon Lepillier that there were others in the clearing besides Carchot.

Behind an immobile Kanaka he perceived for the first time a woman, a woman holding a revolver, a most unwomanly woman with a masterful chin and badly scratched cheeks. On the ground not ten paces away he discerned the body of a man who, unmistakably, had died a recent and violent death.

When Carchot left him to rush to the woman's assistance he decided the situation had grown far too complex for his exhausted mind to grasp. Like some equatorial Daniel Boone he leaned upon his rifle and glowered first at the dolts who would not save him and then along the path which his foes would have to travel.

CUPPING his hands about his mouth Iramutu called to his people. Three times the summons went crashing down the valley and as the last sound died away, they came sidling out of the bush in twos and threes, sullen and lowering.

"He has spared us," began the headman, indicating Carchot. "He stayed this other one's hand, for he says it is right that we should live in peace and he has forgiven us."

"O Iramutu," one man broke in, "there are no others. This stranger came alone. We could——"

"He came alone," countered the chief, "because he knows no fear. But his ship is there, waiting for him, and if he is harmed the ship will belch men and fire and we shall be stamped into the ground."

An old hag with a dithering head, cried out at the warriors:

"Ye ran away from one man, O ye terrible men. And I bred you—you craven spawn! In my time these three would have been in the ovens, but in my time, by Pwimboro, there were fighters living here—not cowards."

"*Aie!* and in your time there were no guns," jeered Iramutu. "Be still, you witch, would you have us all killed?"

She spat at him and hobbled away pouring abuse upon her sons as she went.

Laboriously, many times interrupted, Iramutu placated the tribesmen. It would be senseless to kill these white folk, he declared; in the long run it never paid for they were too strong.

At Carchot's behest he preached toleration, insisting upon the advantages to be derived from friendly intercourse with these powerful men.

Ngorodi and Neriwa had been killed? That was true, but everything was now clear. The murderers were ignorant people who in their blindness had seen fit to burn the planter's house and drive him away. But see how swiftly punishment followed upon such misdeeds! A boat came up from the depths of the sea, a boat laden with every conceivable engine of destruction.

"He came to our hills to seek our help," said Iramutu. "We fell upon him without cause. Now, to prove our worth, he has ordered a test. We must go down to the lowlands and capture those murderers. There must be no great killing, just a little perhaps if they will not give in. When this is done we shall be paid for every prisoner we take."

The prospect of a raid sanctioned and condoned by the white man drew a murmur of approval from the crowd. They were convinced their prospective enemies might not willingly surrender.

The day was waning. Long shadows crept across the valley floor. Beyond the hills flamed an opal sky, and a breeze stirred the dust in the clearing.

Carchot smiled at Miss Gordon.

"It has succeeded," he whispered. "You have genius, madame. I should never have thought of such a scheme. Without you——"

"When are they going down?"

"But tonight! At once!"

"That's good. Keep them moving, don't give them time to think. That chief especially, see he goes with his men. We'll stay here until morning."

Lepillier was slowly recovering from his state of exhaustion. Breathing was again with him a matter of instinct, not a conscious, agonizing effort to sustain life. No longer did he anticipate an immediate assault by the ferocious host which had pursued him. Moreover, when it gradually dawned upon him that this very host was composed exclusively of his intended recruits his indignation arose and choked him. He wanted to demand explanations, wanted to scourge Carchot for his culpable negligence, but he could not place a single word. He was ignored as completely as if he were at the other end of the earth.

It became unendurable when he found that Miss Gordon had assumed the rôle of dictator. It was intolerable, indecent. Carchot seemed perfectly happy to accept a subordinate position and transmit her dictums to the Kanakas. He acted as if he reverenced the shrewish woman. Carchot might please himself, but he, Lepillier, would have none of it.

He was not a boor, on the contrary he possessed all the attributes proper to gentlemen, but he expected women to be weak that he might protect them. He could charm ladies, if the ladies understood the gentle art of submission. He had a trick of throwing back his head and looking at them down his nose which was absolutely irresistible. A snake practises the same arts with little birds, but the snake is an odious reptile, whereas Lepillier was—a gentleman. He asked nothing of women but that they should please the eye and rest the brain. In return he looked at them down his nose. What more could they hope for, the silly creatures? Secretly he despised them, but he concealed his real feelings behind a barrage of adulation, flattery and ineffable politeness.

But Miss Gordon was outside the pale. She was not beautiful; she ignored the meaning of the word submission.

Lepillier revolted.

"Pardon me, madame," he said with a touch of asperity. "You are ordering these savages to assassinate my laborers, I believe."

"Can you think of some better plan?" she demanded briskly.

"I am sure one could devise——"

"What I want to know is—*have* you something better to suggest right now? We can't wait, we can't choose, we must act. We're only alive now because Monsieur Carchot has bluffed these blacks to a standstill. He can't bluff them forever."

"Carchot," sneered Lepillier, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper. "He is useless, that one! Do not trust him! Remember what you have suffered because of his depravation. I am so sorry for you, you have had a dreadful experience! If he had not given way to mat fever, today you——"

"Watch him," murmured Miss Gordon. "Do you call that man weak? He's resurrected. Listen to him."

Night rolling up out of the west had drained the sky of color. Somewhere in the deepening shadows Carchot was speaking to Iramutu and his tone revealed no trace of weakness; it was sharp, clear, compelling. It rang above the blurred monotone of the tribesmen's voices.

"You will go now," he was saying, "and at sunrise we shall follow. Let there be no needless killing. I shall give the reward only for unharmed prisoners."

"You are without fear," Iramutu answered deferentially. "We are your children. But that woman——"

"May the disease (leprosy) rot the tongue in your mouth," snarled Carchot. "She is not to be mentioned."

Magnanimous, indifferent came the chieftain's answer:

"It is well spoken. She is our mother and we her slaves."

"Go now!"

The murmur of voices ceased. Abruptly Miss Gordon was aware that the darkness surrounding her was empty of men. Out of the stillness arose a single note—the hurried, unending rush and splash of the waterfall. As the seconds, like hours, dragged away, the sound became all-pervading, dreary as a sigh.

"Why," she thought, "I hadn't noticed that before, yet it has been going on all the time!"

Close at hand, out of nothingness, Carchot spoke:

"They are gone. Until morning we are reprieved."

A babel of sound broke out. Down the line of huts a dozen fires sprang into being making pools of ruddy light in the darkness.

"Women," explained Carchot in answer to Miss Gordon's exclamation. "They are still with us. Never forget the women. You know," he gave a throaty chuckle, "it is lucky for me that they are not combative. If they had your determination without your standards——"

She laughed. Lepillier hated her for that laugh. It was such a tacit admission of an intimacy which wholly excluded him.

"I am determined to sit down by one of those fires," she declared. "And if we could find something to eat——"

Carchot summoned help. The women brought live embers on strips of bark, piled dry twigs upon them and crouching close to the ground blew mightily as they fed the blaze. The flames leaped up roaring. Other women appeared with leaf platters heaped with baked eel and taros.

Said Charcot, with his mouth full of food:

"Brailley brought you across from Api, I suppose. I want to get enough stuff from him to pay these people."

Lepillier's exasperation boiled over.

"There is not a man in the Hebrides who would give you a day's credit," he retorted, his voice trembling with anger.

Miss Gordon, resting her chin on her knuckles, sat motionless, listening.

"Oh," Carchot said lightly, "I have had a bad spell, but it's over now. I shall have the place straightened out in no time."

"You won't. You whine about having had a bad spell. And you call that an excuse—a suitable excuse. You know you lie. It was mat fever, nothing else."

It pleased him to see Carchot's eyes waver, and he went on:

"Whose fault is it that we are here? Yours—you vagabond. You should be punished. How long will it take me to tame those recruits now that you have contaminated them? Who will pay me for my trouble and the men whose deaths you caused? You don't know what to say. You are ashamed, eh?"

"I didn't ask Brailley to leave those men with me," Carchot mumbled in his beard.

"No, you were too great a waster to handle even that fool. And you needn't talk about going to work again. You never will. These hillsmen won't work for you——"

"I have an idea," Miss Gordon cut in. She paused thoughtfully. "Yes, it might do."

"One can not help such a *saleté*," snapped Lepillier. "And I give him fair warning—if any of those laborers are killed tonight I shall have him arrested for inciting a rebellion."

"That was my suggestion," drawled Miss Gordon. "You object?"

"I am astonished," Lepillier reproved her. "Your plan! But, of course, Carchot would listen to *anybody*."

"And perhaps my idea isn't much more acceptable." Her voice had grown mild and soft, rather diffident. "I don't see why Mr. Carchot shouldn't keep the laborers. Pay for them, naturally. He could start in at once, tomorrow. If they get a sound drubbing they'll be as meek as can be."

"My recruits!" Lepillier spluttered angrily. "My recruits! Madame, it is impossible."

"Oh, is it really? Well!" For a second she studied his wrathful countenance all distorted by the firelight, then she turned to Carchot demanding—

"What do you think of it?"

"I am a failure," he began.

"You are," agreed Lepillier.

"I thought I *wanted* to be a failure," Carchot said slowly, with long pauses between words. "But I find that I do not want to be a failure. It is very complicated."

He lapsed into silence, sitting hunched with his head bowed down on his knees.

Lepillier yawned.

"I beg your pardon," he murmured with false politeness. "Such a trying day! And I must ask you, madame, not to put ridiculous ideas into this man's head. I understand. It is a joke, but with such people one can never be too careful."

"Is it a ridiculous idea?" she asked hesitatingly. "Well, perhaps it is. Won't you suggest something? You have had so much experience——"

A poisonous doubt crept into Lepillier's mind. Could she possibly be laughing at him? No! The idea was absurd. She was admitting defeat. He glanced at her from beneath bent brows. Her face showed no trace of emotion except her mouth, which was drawn down slightly at the corners. The amazon was transformed into a weak woman who seemed on the verge of tears.

Lepillier rewarded her meekness with a most condescending smile.

"I should be doing him a favor if I sent him to prison," he declared. "You may leave everything to me. Naturally, I must have those Kanakas. They belong to me and I need them badly."

"I suppose I was foolish," she sighed.

"Ladies do not understand such matters," he said grandly. "Ladies——"

He stopped, amazed to find Carchot towering above him, brandishing a hairy fist within an inch of his nose.

Carchot bayed at him:

"Shut your —— mouth! What do you mean—talking like that? She has more brains, more good sense, more——"

Lepillier found his most supercilious stare of no avail. Sitting on the ground he was at too much of a disadvantage. He tried to stand up only to be kicked down.

"She cured me," Carchot raved on. "Do you think you could have done as much? No, you can only sneer, but you can't frighten me."

"I'll have you arrested," spluttered Lepillier, shielding his ribs with his elbows.

"Tell her she is wonderful!" bellowed Carchot. "Tell her you're an ass."

"Bandit!" snarled Lepillier. "Vagabond!"

He glared at Miss Gordon.

"Have I your permission to punish this fellow?"

But he was in no position to assume the offensive. Carchot, gritting his teeth, caught him by the coat collar and shook him violently.

"Stop it," commanded Miss Gordon, her voice no longer diffident and mild. "Stop it, I tell you."

Carchot obeyed instantly. Forgetting Lepillier he turned to Miss Gordon and said quite dispassionately:

"That is the way to handle them. *De la poigne!* Is madame content?"

"Don't worry about me," she answered. "If you aren't careful you'll reopen that wound."

He looked at her with dog-like eyes, so thrilled because she had remembered his injury that he could not speak.

"But I am not contented!" declared Lepillier menacingly. "I am going to give you——"

A Kanaka, his body glistening with sweat, burst into the circle of light.

"It is over!" he called out wildly. "We caught them while they slept. All of them. *Aie!* How they screamed!"

"They did not fight?" asked Carchot.

"Fight!" laughed the Kanaka. "Only a few. See—" he indicated some strands of hair stuck to the stained head of his club—"that one fought like a demon, but I brought him down."

He strutted vaingloriously, tremendously excited for the women grouped in the semi-obscurity were watching him with pride.

"And now," he said, "you are to come with me down to the sea. It is as you said—the boat is there; we saw its lights shining through the darkness. Iramutu waits for the reward."

"We leave at dawn," answered Carchot.

"No." The Kanaka carelessly twirled his club as he spoke. "You must come with me now. We are not safe so close to that boat. We need your protection."

"We go with you at once," agreed Carchot.

He translated the native's words, winking at Miss Gordon as he concluded—

"So you see, unless we consent to protect them, I am very much afraid we shall be clubbed over the head."

With superb nonchalance he turned to Lepillier. Very bored, stroking his beard with a dirty hand, he added in a falsetto voice in imitation of the *grande manière*—

"And you will accompany us, I hope, Monsieur Lepillier?"

Miss Gordon gave one loud cough that might have been a giggle had she not hastily covered her mouth with a handkerchief. As she followed Carchot out of the village her shoulders shook as if palzied. By the dim light of the last smoldering fire Lepillier noticed her apparent distress. He felt so amply revenged that he murmured in her ear:

"Do not weep, madame, for such a worthless creature. Tomorrow I shall teach him to know his place."

The stars were fading out of an albescent sky as the party reached the lowlands and hurried on toward the coast.

They came to the fields, the desolate, neglected fields. As they trudged on in silence the sun rode clear of the sea and bathed the land in golden light. Carchot marched with the swing of a conqueror, a rather portly, very bedraggled conqueror, as he passed down the line of hutments and reached the ash-strewn space where once his homestead had stood. He felt as if he were returning after years of absence instead of three days.

"There they are!" he cried out as he caught sight of the natives massed beneath the trees.

Iramutu came toward him.

"Count them," he begged, pointing to the prisoners huddled close together, penned in by the hillsmen, "count them and," he grinned, "pay, for I am thirsty."

"You, Lepillier," ordered Carchot. "Go down and shout until Brailley hears you. Hurry up!"

"No," growled Lepillier. "I refuse."

"I'll go," briskly said Miss Gordon, and hurried away without waiting for an answer.

Carchot stared after her until Lepillier snickered:

"Romance! This American lady, she is crazy about you. What a voice!"

It floated clear and high across the water—

"Mis-ter Brailley! Ship ahoy! Mis-ter Brai-lee!"

"You count them soon?" insisted Iramutu.

Carchot nodded his assent and the recruits shuddered as they saw him come toward them. They fell to their knees and cried for forgiveness, for deliverance. The men of Vungari Umburu looked on complacently. They had justified their great name and were very proud.

"They are all here," said Iramutu.

"Yes, except the dead. Sixty-two! Is that all you have left?"

"A few threw themselves at us. What could we do? But all the women are here—unharmed. Will you pay me now?"

"As soon as the boat comes ashore," snapped Carchot.

"Eighteen have been killed since the trouble broke out," he told Lepillier. "It is a big loss."

"Murderer!" shouted Lepillier at the top of his voice. "And where shall I find eighteen new recruits? You are ruining me. Only sixty-two——"

"Oh, didn't you know?" murmured Carchot. "I have decided to keep them."

"I do not understand?"

"No? I am desolated. I am keeping these sixty-two men and women, here on Rapanga, to work for me. Brailley had no right to carry women, you had no right to expect him to do so. The whole affair is illegal. So my conduct is really above reproach. My intervention settles everything. Now do you understand?"

"It's that woman," Lepillier burst out. "I knew she——"

Carchot's fist crashed full in his mouth. His head went back with a jerk and another blow landed with painful force beneath his heart. He beat wildly at the air; by chance his fingers closed on Carchot's hair just above the wound. He tugged—and he grinned through cut lips when he saw the blood flow down his opponent's cheeks.

This unforeseen development appealed to the hillsmen. They shouted impartial encouragement. They yelled with delight when Carchot butted the other man off his feet; they applauded frantically when Lepillier, jumping up again, tore out another handful of hair.

When their strength waned, they wrestled body to body and rolled over clutching at each other's throat. In one last desperate rally Carchot freed himself. He tried to clear the blood from his eyes. But Lepillier gave him no respite. He was brought down again. The fall stunned him; he tried to protect his face with his hands—they were wrenched away. He felt Lepillier's fingers twine in his hair and he cried out—

"Not that, you ——, not that!"

Lepillier exulted. He found a perverse pleasure in punishing his helpless enemy. He was so fascinated that he failed to hear the sound of running footsteps close behind him, and he yelped with pain when the iron-shod toe of a sea-boot, propelled with great accuracy and force, pitched him headlong onto the ground.

He looked up. Brailley stood above him. Brailley with a drawn, haggard countenance and red-rimmed eyes.

Said Brailley in his best East India Docks voice:

"Thought you'd done me one in the eye, Monsoor Lepillier, blast you? You only *thought* so. Left me locked up on me own —— boat. Stayed away too long, that's what you done. Oh, I'm sober all right and I'll stay sober for a good long time. 'Ere, get up and take a licking like a man. Come on nah."

But Lepillier was not "coming on." He wanted to lie still and be forgotten. There was a pain in his stomach and he was a very sick man.

"You'll go 'ome in irons, that's what," Brailley went on wrathfully. "You and your crooked deals. I'd 'urt you if shoe leather weren't too good to waste."

Miss Gordon had wound her vast handkerchief about Carchot's head. He lay propped against her knee, blissfully at peace with the world. He smiled up into her eyes and sighed a happy sigh of contentment.

"If it had not been for that cut," he apologized, "I should have punished him, I promise you."

"You're feeling much better," she asserted calmly. "Here is Mr. Brailley. Please tell him what you want him to do. These Kanakas are becoming restless."

"What a woman!" thought Carchot with a groan. "So cold! So wonderful! And what eyes!"

She desired him to rise above bodily

pain? She admired efficiency? Very well, if it cost him his life he would be stoical and efficient.

He beckoned Brailley to his side and issued curt orders.

"You're keeping the Kanakas!" exclaimed the trader. "Who's going to pay for 'em?"

"I am." Carchot was brief and incisive—so cold! He hoped he was making a favorable impression. "And I want trade-goods. I'll give you a check for the whole amount. Bring me a blank check."

He enumerated a score of articles and wound up with—

"Also I want two bull-whips and the loan of Vangare."

"I told you once before I couldn't spare him."

"Once before is not now. You are going to let me have him. I insist."

"What's come over you anyhow?" grinned Brailley. "If you feel that way, sure you can 'ave him for a while."

"Never mind what has come over me," snapped Carchot. "Bring those things ashore at once. And, by the way, take that Lepillier person with you. Take him away—lose him if you like."

"Mr. Brailley, are you, by any chance, going down to Vila?" inquired Miss Gordon.

"Yes'm. Want to leave Rapanga?"

"Must. May I travel with you?"

Carchot's world came clattering down about his ears. She was going away! He could not, would not believe it. He needed help—inspiration. A furious struggle raged within him, but he subdued it.

"Are you going at once?" he asked coldly. "Or shall you wait until my supplies come ashore?"

"I think I'll go now," she answered. "I'm beginning to feel tired. And—I nearly forgot to mention it—do get me one of those *tamate timorin* belts the women wear, will you?"

Belts! What did he care about belts. She was going away.

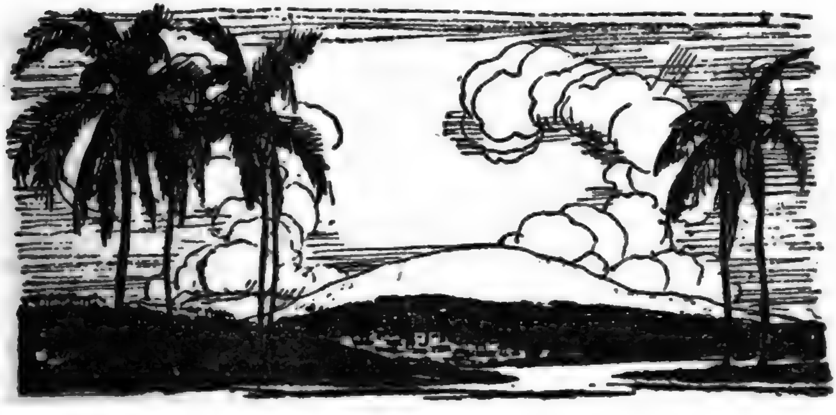
"I shall try——"

"Do! Send it to me at New York. I'll be there for several months. When you get things really straightened out why not take a trip across? You would love our curator. He's very much interested in the work you have done."

She wanted him to go to New York! She would like to see him again! A great hope buoyed him up and a burning resolve fired his brain. He would wrench a fortune out of the wilderness and follow her.

He said:

"I shall be delighted to meet the curator. He must be a charming man."



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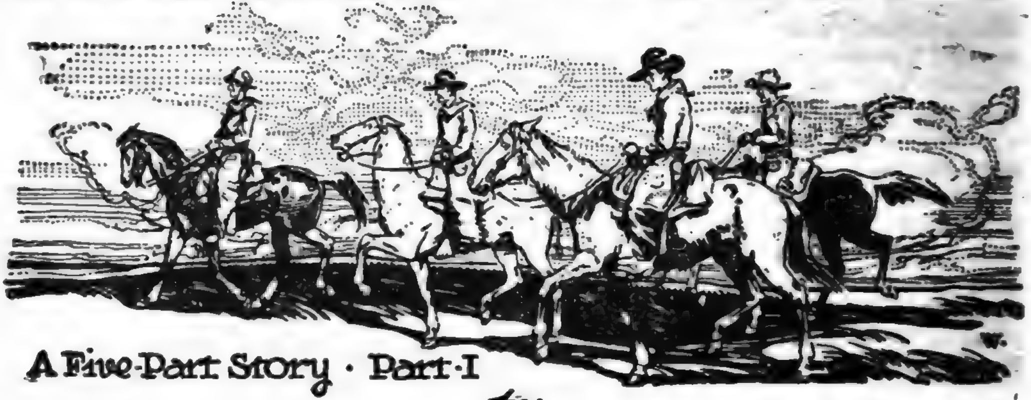

A Five-Part Story · Part I

by

Gordon Young

Author of "On the Waterfront," "Oysthers!"

ONE passenger left the train at Martinez, which, though Spanish in name, was in appearance little more than a few adobe shacks and rough board store-buildings set down on the plains within hailing distance of a water-tank.

The landscape was hot and barren, flat, burned, sandy and shimmering with heat.

Some weary faces with mouths open, fish-like, peered listlessly out of the train windows. Their eyes took in the level, bare, desert-like country, gazed at the red box that was the station, searched the dusty street where a half-dozen stores were huddled in a row across from other stores much like them; and having looked about at the hot earth and blistered buildings, at the empty labyrinth of cattle-pens by a spur and at high heaven where on that July day there was not a wisp of cloud against the afternoon sun, these train-worn passengers listlessly looked, half-curious and pitying at the solitary passenger who had got off.

No one was about the station. The street, where long rows of hitching posts stood in enigmatic disuse—as if the generation to which they belonged had passed away—was empty. Not a person was in sight, not a horse, not a dog, not a sound or sign of life. It was as if the young man had got off in a village as lifelessly empty as some of the villages aborigines had scraped out in the cliffs of the high mountains that, like a great bulwark, showed on the horizon more than a hundred miles away.

The porter, following the passenger from the train, dropped the two heavy suitcases on the ground, took his tip with an anxious snatch and darted back into the vestibule as if afraid the train might go suddenly and leave him, too, in this desolate place.

Two trunks had already been cast end over end, like things discarded, from the baggage car. The suitcases were initialed, N. S.; the tags tacked to the trunks gave the name Norman Standish, New York, N. Y.

The conductor waved his arm. There was a hiss of steam, strident, piercing; a clattering ring of the train bell. The train began to move.

The porter, after staring wonderingly at the man they were leaving, slammed shut his vestibule door and disappeared. A pale girl, wilted by the heat, caught the man's eyes and smiled vaguely, a little sorry for him. With the train bearing her away she might safely venture that small kindness. A pop-eyed fat man who had a wet handkerchief plastered on his forehead, leaned from his window to look back, perhaps trying with a last gobbling glance to understand why anybody would willingly get off the train at such a place.

This man they were leaving was very young, he looked Eastern, thoroughly

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"Standish of the Star Y.", copyright, 1923, by Gordon Young.

Eastern. He carried gloves and a walking-stick.

The train, running on a track straight as a ray of light, flat as if across a table-top, seemed diminishing rather than moving; though after it became hardly more than a speck it remained for a long time in sight.

Norman Standish stared all about. To him the wide reach of sand plains, dotted with low-lying cactus where the brittle skeletons of tumbleweed had lodged, seemed beautiful. He was not an artist, but he felt what artists must feel when they come to a place that fulfills their longing. The tones of dusty grayness, the sun-scorched browns that merged into the darkness that shadows have, the ashy streak of a road that became a thread and vanished on its way toward the distant mountains, the hot yellowish glare of sand that had drifted under the whooping winds, pleased him.

He looked at the circular water-tank standing far up the track; its big round body rested on spindling legs, its long thin neck that bent to panting engines was now upraised with an almost animate pride.

As high up as a small boy could reach by standing on a saddled pony, his initials were carved on one of those water-tank legs.

Norman looked toward the empty cattle pens which he had often seen filled with restless horned heads—nothing but heads, it had seemed to him, perched high with short legs dangling from a four-by-six beam that braced the runway against the sidelong lurch of frightened cattle when they were being prodded toward the cars.

Again he looked with reminiscent interest at the black letters that gave the town's name on the boxcar-like building that was the station:

MARTINEZ

II

ON A dark night almost a dozen years before, while a heavy rain fell with thunder overhead, he had stood within the station, his childish face pressed against a window-pane.

The storm, as filled with thunder and lightning as any that he had ever seen, made him uneasy; but he would not let anyone know. His mother had taught him that to tremble or shrink was to be a coward.

This night his mother, pale though dark of eyes and hair, straight-shouldered, with her soft lips pressed to the thinness of a knife's edge, sat in silence on a chair that the elderly telegraph operator had, with respectful humbleness, brought to her from his little cubbyhole where he listened to the staccato chattering of the wires. Norman's uncle, a gaunt, dark and darkly-bearded man, paced with long strides back and forth in the small station. His long yellow slicker dripped and glistened in the dim light of a dirty lamp. By the door a red lantern was burning.

From time to time as lightning streaked the darkness, Norman could see outside a solitary figure in broad hat and yellow raincoat. This was also a mere boy, but tall, strong, thoroughly a range man, and reckless with courage, though now aloof and impenetrable from a sense of having been wronged. He was a half-brother, some six or seven years older than Norman, but almost a stranger.

Norman's mother, though of a western family, had been raised in the East. She was more familiar with Europe than with the West, and liked it better.

She had not at all liked the country to which Colonel Standish, a man of fine appearance and long military training, had brought her, though the Standish range joined that of her own family. She had been brought to a great ranch-house, flat of roof, rambling from being added-to every decade or so since it had been a square fort-like room of solid timbers and stone that stood off Indians, and outlaw gangs that were worse than Indians; and this house, so thick of wall, so close to mountain shadows, was ever full of gloom and a chill that the hottest day never quite removed.

The furnishings were wonderfully luxurious for a house more than a hundred miles from the railroad, but pitifully bare for one who had been used to the best comforts of a city. The young girl saw only the harsh colors, the crudeness of taste; and, for instance, where others had marveled at a grand piano in solid mahogany case, she touched the instrument but once and shuddered at its tuneless jangling.

From the first she had felt less than a bride since she came into a house where, in every corner, in every closet, were the signs of another woman, not long dead.

The second Mrs. Standish did not complain. She was the daughter of pioneers who had settled in the same country long before the name Standish was known there. Hers was not a whimpering heritage.

On her arrival her discomfort had been greatly increased by the presence of a small step-son with whom she could not make friends. He was only six or seven at the time, but persistently shy and stubborn toward the strange woman whom he was ordered to call "mother." Colonel Standish would not listen to his young wife's protest, but thrashed the boy; and Robert Standish would not then, or afterwards, call her "mother."

Robert had no change of feeling toward his father for that, or such other whippings as the discipline of Colonel Standish seemed to require; but this second mother was and always remained a woman that he did not want to know. When he was in her presence he was scrupulously respectful, but would not be impressed by her beauty, gentleness or kindness. And she, though his attitude was painful, from the first respected his loyalty to his mother.

Robert's feeling of resentment, if it was resentment, might naturally have increased after Norman was born, for Colonel Standish, being deeply in love with his young wife, doted on the new son, petted him, made over him—all the while that Robert, partly through the wish to avoid the house, was sleeping out with the men, passing from one round-up to another, and in the first of his teens doing almost a man's work.

The two boys hardly knew each other; certainly not as boys commonly know each other on the same ranch. Robert always regarded Norman with a large boy's unconcern for a baby. Besides, Robert was away from the house a great deal, and when at home he was busy with the horses and dogs, or with some manly trinket, like plaiting a chain of horsehair, or stringing coyote scalps—all his own. Also he avoided Norman as much as he could.

Once they had come near to getting acquainted. Norman, at the time, was eight; Robert almost fifteen. Norman all eyes and interest, had found his brother on the sunny side of the stable skinning a big snake and making preparations to dry the skin for a hatband which would have eighteen rattles to tinkle with every movement of his head.

Norman made comments and asked questions that were ignored. Robert was absorbed, importantly at work. A snake with eighteen rattles was a man's trophy. Norman touched the tail's tip to count them.

"Here, don't you touch them!" said Robert.

"I won't hurt 'em. I want to see."

"Get away you! This is my snake. Get away, 'Pet.'"

"I won't get away!"

And Norman, who loathed the name Pet, which he knew was applied to him by the men, and by even some of the Mexican house servants who meant it tenderly, closed his hand on the precious rattles and stared defiantly.

"I'll break 'em," he said, and looked as though he meant it.

Robert slapped him. The blow was sudden and hard.

Norman staggered back, hurt in face and feelings. He clenched his fists, looked at his big strong step-brother and began nervously to cry.

Colonel Standish stepped into view. Norman saw him and tried to stop crying.

"Here! Here! What's the matter, son?"

It was noticeable that he always addressed Norman as "son"; Robert was "Robert."

"I—I slipped there and fell," said Norman, pointing at the smooth soft ground.

"And are crying?" demanded the colonel, stiffening. Then: "Robert, what's the matter?"

"I slapped him, sir."

"You struck him! You! A boy smaller than yourself!"

"He had hold of my snake and——"

Robert stopped, and stubbornly would say nothing more.

Colonel Standish took both boys into the barn. Very calmly he reached down a buggy whip from the nail where it hung by the lash, and standing off from Robert whipped him soundly. Robert took it respectfully, without a sound.

"Son," said Colonel Standish, taking Norman's arm, "I respect you for trying to shield your brother, but I shall punish you for having lied to me."

He then gave him a severe whipping; and Norman, too, took it without a sound.

As they marched out of the barn before their father, Robert whispered—

"You're a good kid, Pet."

The next day Robert was sent on the

trail with the beef cut; and from Martinez he went on the cattle train clear to Kansas City. He came back a month later feeling full-grown, having been abroad in the world and seen sights.

From then on the boys did not have much opportunity to get better acquainted. Norman was kept busy with studies that his mother supervised; and Robert was out on the range, also learning lessons.

Robert was seventeen when Colonel Standish died.

The ranch, and all of his holdings, were left to his widow who knew nothing of work or management. The estate was left without reservation or conditions, excepting that on her death everything she had inherited from her husband was to be divided equally between his two sons.

She naturally turned to her brother, whose 44 Circle range touched on the south of the Standish Star Y; and he, a dark, taciturn man, with a brooding watchful bearing and an enigmatic way of staring with black-eyed steadiness at whomever he addressed, took charge.

This, more than anything else had done, angered Robert, who felt that he, with the Star Y's old superintendent, a man named McCullough, could very well have managed the range. But there was nothing that Robert could do to change Mrs. Standish's decision. She had no wish to thwart her step-son, but she distrusted his youth. Renalds, her brother, was a cattle man, as his father had been; and as she was leaving the West and wanted neither herself nor Norman to return, she wished to leave it under a management that she felt would be secure and relieve her of worry.

The day before she left Mrs. Standish herself asked Robert to drive her to the station. It was the better part of a two-day trip, with an overnight stop at Reddin's, a road-house among a clump of cottonwoods that sat deep in a mile wide basin some thirty miles from Martinez.

She would make the trip in the buckboard. This was a wide, light vehicle, high off the ground, its seat canopied with strong duck, fashioned like a buggy top which would keep off sun, wind or rain when the curtains were on. When there was need a second seat with the same kind of top was put on the wagon.

Mrs. Standish had hoped that by sitting with Robert on the long ride and talking with him they could come to a better understanding; so she asked him to drive.

He, with a watchful, but entirely respectful manner, had at first made a firm excuse; then, suddenly, said that he would, of course.

They had not driven three miles before Renalds, who was on horseback beside the buckboard, said:

"Take Whirler and ride on to Reddin's. Tell him, Robert, that Mrs. Standish will be there about six o'clock."

Reddin did not keep an entirely respectable place. Pretty wild doings occasionally went on. There were many mounds without headstones out back of the corrals. The road-house was, however, a convenience to travelers; and, some people suspected, even more of a convenience to horse thieves.

When Robert arrived he found that Reddin had been notified the day before, and the house was quiet, even cleaned in spots.

Robert was a little angered at feeling that Renalds had merely used an excuse to get him out of the buckboard.

"Yes," his step-uncle said when Robert, without any effort to conceal his feeling, mentioned it that night, "I did send word yesterday. But you know Reddin's. What if we had driven into the yard with one of his women cursing and yelling? I made sure it wouldn't happen."

The next morning Mrs. Standish awakened with a headache. She called it merely a slight pain.

It was raining. They waited at Reddin's as long as they could before setting out; but the rain did not lessen; and after they had started, great clouds that through the morning lay motionless in the west, moved forward, thundering as they came.

Robert drove. Mrs. Standish, shut in on all exposed sides with waterproof curtains, sat by him, almost blinded by her headache. It would have been better if she had complained, groaned a little, for Robert did make two or three friendly remarks, but froze impenetrably at what seemed the monosyllabic indifference of her replies.

They did not reach Martinez until after dark. The train was almost due, but would likely be late. The storm continued.

"Put up the team then come to help get the baggage on the train, Robert," Renalds said in his watchful, calm way, eying the boy with a kind of distrustful steadiness, which however was habitual with him, no matter to whom he spoke.

Robert returned to the station, but he waited outside, in the rain. The train was late. The elderly operator *click-click clicked* for information, but learned nothing. An hour stretched itself into two. At last Norman, peering through the pane, saw a twinkling gleam far off.

"It's coming!" he cried.

Renalds went outside, then returned and began helping Mrs. Standish get her things together.

The elderly operator, after hurrying into a black torn rubber coat and old hat, stood hammering away at his key until the train was almost at hand. He then shuffled quickly from his desk, picked up the red lantern by the door, and going on the track swung the lantern back and forth. The eastbound stopped only on signal at Martinez; and it came out of the darkness like a Cyclopean monster, massive, headlong, slowing down with squeal of steam as if in pain, and furious grinding of brakes. A figure with a lantern jumped from the train and ran along the side of the track shouting:

"All aboard! All 'board! We're late now. We're late!"

He appeared to think that people who had waited through those overdue hours would not know.

Robert gathered up the three suitcases and followed at a clumsy run as Renalds with a hand on Norman's shoulder and under Mrs. Standish's arm hurried them through the rain to where the great black car stood, its sides shining with wet.

Mrs. Standish was helped on board; Norman was thrust up after her. He bumped blindly against the porter who was reaching down to get hold of the suitcases without getting in the rain.

Norman was confusedly aware of a bustling in the dim vestibule, and felt the half-daze of being suddenly in a strange place. Outside there was a moment's clamor of hurried shouts and vague quick answers. He felt a sensation of reeling and groped unsteadily as the train began to move. Then he heard a far away indistinct "Good-by, Pet!" and the world outside was shut off by the downward bang of the vestibule floor door. Norman flushed at the name. He did not know whether the good-by was said in friendliness or insult.

III

MRS. STANDISH, in planning their life in the East, had fondly pictured that now through Norman's enjoyment of the pleasures and refinements so utterly lacking in the rough country that she would be vicariously repaid for her unhappiness while there.

But from the first, and through the years that followed, Norman showed a passionate love of horses, and his mother looked with anxious suspicion on his pride in firearms and marksmanship.

She never quite recovered her feeling of security from the time when, with a mother's fond furtiveness, she had examined some papers on a desk where Norman had been writing with much studious brooding. She suspected a boyish letter to some childish girl; and she found the outpouring of a youngster who had been stuffing himself on bad poetry:

Oh the land I love best
Is the land of the West,
A land that I once knew well;
Where the spiny cactus stands
Amid the wild, wind-blown sands,
And the sun is hot as hell.

I want to go where strong men ride
With a six gun dangling at their side,
And they don't give a —— what may betide
As they drag their calves to the branding fire.

The creak of leather and the lash of quirt,
The clatter of hoofs and the six gun's spurt,
The curse of a villain as he hits the dirt
Are the things of my heart's desire.

There was more, but Mrs. Standish read no further. She did not recognize the confidential out-pouring of a normal boy to his muse. She did not understand. She was exasperated and a little frightened. It seemed to her that all that she was doing for him, his education, his appreciation of finer and worth-while things, would be wasted if he ever returned to ranch life; and this sense of waste, combined with her own intense dislike of the country, made her apprehensive.

She was further disturbed just at this time by a letter from Robert. He had become twenty-one and insisted on being recognized as competent to take charge of the ranch. The letter was meant to be respectful, but it sounded to her very harsh and crude for he had written while still flushed from a quarrel with the taciturn Renalds.

Robert accused her brother of mismanagement and worse. The letter declared that Renalds refused to give him any accounting of ranch affairs or to discuss points of management with him; that from the first Renalds had seemed determined to get rid of every man who had long been in the employ of the Star Y, and in their places Renalds had gathered in fellows who were known as gunmen rather than cowmen; that Renalds encroached on neighboring ranges; that Renalds persistently drove out nesters, even when they squatted down clear beyond the Star Y range; that Renalds was trying to make his own (Robert's) place on the ranch so disagreeable that he would leave.

"But—" so Robert wrote—"I'll be —— if I leave the Standish range for any man. I was born here, grew up here, I have the right to be here, and I stick."

True enough, Robert had crossed out the "be —— if" and written above it "won't," but Mrs. Standish felt as though he had sworn at her.

Renalds answered her questions by pointing out that he had displaced the old Star Y men with others in whom he had more confidence; that he had protected the Star Y range against all comers, as though it were his own; that he had never discussed business with her Robert because the boy was the wildest of dare-devils, hard to handle, full of courage but absolutely without any sense of responsibility; and that the only reason he had permitted Robert to stay on the ranch at all was because she had requested that nothing be done to drive him away.

Then, advised by her lawyer, Mrs. Standish wrote her brother to sell the ranch. He answered that he would if she insisted; but that cattle were down and land was worthless, and that if thrown on the market at this time there would be very little realized in comparison to the real worth of the ranch. He suggested that she wait for a rise in values.

She replied that she would wait a little while, but that the ranch must be sold, no matter at what sacrifice, before Norman had finished college. She also admitted that Norman did not want her to sell it, which in itself was one of the strongest reasons for making her wish to be rid of it.

Time went by. Norman finished with his studies and went abroad. His trip was hardly begun before he was recalled by his mother's death.

Norman wrote his uncle that the lawyer who had looked after his mother's affairs was on a vacation somewhere up in the Maine woods, and that just as soon as he (Norman) could get the affairs left on his hands straightened out that he was coming West and take up ranching.

A telegram answered:

> Stay where you are. Situation here worse than ever. Really dangerous to come. Am writing you in detail—C. C. RENALDS.

Norman did not reply. He did not wait for the letter. He did not wait for the return of the lawyer. He took the train for Martinez.

There was no one to meet him. No one knew that he was coming.

IV

NORMAN now picked up his heavy suitcases and struggling with them to the station, set them in the shade of the building; then stood at the door for a time looking inside. It appeared just as when he had left.

He went slowly up the street, particularly noticing everything that was unchanged, for this seemed friendly, and the changes were few; but in spite of the familiar things he felt like a stranger. He had rather expected to slip back into his boyhood surroundings the moment he stepped from the train, as one slips into old clothes.

Martinez was apparently little more than a place for getting on and off trains set down in a country not much given to travel; but it took on a sort of carnival aspect two or three times a year, particularly in the fall when the cattle moved at a crawling pace through a dust cloud and were crowded through the chutes into the cars.

Usually the town was very quiet, though occasionally men jogged in from across the flat and made things lively in the dull season. San Carlos, to the north, was a more important town, and most of the trade went to it; but men rode in and out of Martinez, coming for the mail, bearing cumbersome and mysterious packages away on their saddles—for the mail order catalogue was to the bunk-house what the Bible would have been had the bunk-house been a theological seminary.

Wagons crawled in, loaded up, creaked out. Sometimes a bonneted woman, thin as a fence post, with a string of children at her heels, came on the wagon and shopped with wary appraisal and thoughtful regard for price tags at the Emporium. Now and then a rickety buckboard, with wobbly wheels came behind low-necked horses, with a slump-shouldered man looking dispiritedly ahead.

These men, these lean women, mingling old age and youth on their drawn faces, these shy, tugging children, were the pests of the range, squatting down on barren places in one- or two-room rough board shacks—sometimes with a dugout behind the house to stow the overflow of children, or perhaps the family lived in the dugout until they could get lumber.

How they managed to keep alive was an exasperating miracle to the cattle men, who suspected that much of their nourishment came from beef after the branded hide was buried.

Norman had always regarded these people with a wide-eyed distrust and the curiosity that a small boy feels for whatever his elders, in the fragments of phrases he has overheard, condemn. What he could not understand was why they came, with their unlovely women and dirty children, huddled in a covered wagon; or having come, why they stuck to the cheerless empty soil. Winds overturned their shacks, heat blasted their crops, cowboys broke through their fences and turned starving cattle into their fields, and sometimes burned shack, shed, wagons and all. Besides, the range belonged to the ranchers.

But come they did. For the most part they seemed sullenly hopeless, these squatters with their smoldering watchful eyes. And they hung on, they brushed the land that they claimed, broke the earth with ploughs, got down pipes to water, raised great circular fans to the wind, rushed crops to a meager harvest between the Winter rains and Summer heat; and so lived on, planting trees, digging more wells, laying out ditches, raising pigs and chickens, cows and horses, fencing pastures, getting in more ploughs and wagons, mowing machines, hiring men—taking hold of the soil, even as a cottonwood fence-post, set down on the plains, will sometimes bud and grow, binding itself in the earth with roots that reach down to hidden water.

Now as he walked up the street he saw some people in the Emporium, heard the *clinkety-clink* of an anvil, and the sound of voices when he passed the Toad Saloon.

At the upper end of the street was a two-story frame building, the only two-story building, though some of the stores had a false second-story front to give them also a metropolitan air. This was the Metropolitan Hotel, and its name had once appeared in large letters on a sign attached to the top of the building and swung out above the street, inviting train travelers to get off and try its hospitality. But the sign was gone. It had blown down, and was never replaced. Besides, it was never known as the Metropolitan, but as Davis's.

On each side of the street were board-walks, for some unknown reason raised about two feet above the ground. And there were a few knot-holes. Once a young Star Y cowpuncher, none too steady, as it was, in sharp-heeled boots and under the weight of Davis's whisky, had stepped into one of these, broken off his heel, and after expressing himself fully on the subject of knot-holes and their ancestry, he had got some newspapers and tried to make a fire under the walk.

The man who owned the store before this knot-hole grew excited. Friends urged the young cowboy to be moderate in his punishment of the knot-hole, and mentioned the strong probability of burning the town. They sympathized soothingly with his feelings, being themselves on dime-pointed heels, and tried to lead him away to such solace as Davis's offered. But every time he took a cripple-like step on his heelless boot, wrath was again jarred loose within him; and the proprietor only reached a safe compromise after bringing a piece of tin from a tomato can, nails and a hatchet, then under the critical supervision of the heelless one, nailing it over the hole.

Norman paused and touched this rusty can's top with the point of his walking-stick; he smiled and went on, feeling more at home.

Two front doors opened into Davis's. One was for the long barn-like bar-room. The other door opened into the "office."

Norman went into the office. It seemed very dim inside; and his first impression was that it had unaccountably shrunk, becoming absurdly narrow and small.

This office was merely a short desk with a high stool behind it, and rack of pigeonholes hung on the wall. Davis, or one of the Davis girls, would sit at the desk after mealtime on busy days and take the money.

The floor was bare, black and splintered where the wear had been against the grain.

Behind the desk, tacked to the wall by the pigeon-holes, was still the picture of a woman, plumed and in tights; a cloud-like red cloak billowed behind her as from a chariot she lashed two cream-colored horses down the course of an amphitheatre, while trailing out behind were other chariots, driven by men, wearing what appeared to be sleeveless nightgowns, their heads bound with fluttering ribbands.

He had often stared up in a mouth-wide daze at this gorgeous creature; but now under his amused appraisal she seemed to have grown a little fat and coarse of feature. There were innumerable fly-specks and a film of dust over the picture which, when first hung, had created much attention and endless comment of a freely critical nature.

A narrow passage led past the office desk, past the stairs, to the dining-room. There was a door under the stairs, and beside this door was a broken mirror, with a nearly hairless brush and an aluminum comb, each attached to a light chain. Outside the door was a low bench, greasy-white from the sloshing of soapy water, with many tin wash-basins and a barrel and a bucket to dip out the water. The water was strongly alkali and came from a pump near the rear of the building.

Norman remembered it all clearly for he had often stopped at Davis's with his father.

A woman with a baby on one arm came from under the stairs. She looked tired and shrunken of chest, as if the baby had taken away part of her life with its milk. Her long one-piece calico dress was higher in front than behind, and it was not clean. Her hair was combed straight back and wound into a tight knot behind her head, but there were loose ends showing with the frayed brittleness that strong soap, alkali water and hot weather give to women's hair.

She regarded him with staring wariness, and without friendliness said—

"Howdy?"

For a moment he tried hard to see in her thin, prematurely middle-aged face some trace of either one of the Davis girls' features.

He asked doubtfully—

"You aren't one of the Davis girls, are you?"

She eyed him with expressionless steadiness; then—

"You want to see them Davises?"

"Why, yes. I would like a room for tonight. And if Mr. Davis or if one of the girls is about I would like to see them."

"I can give you a room, I reckon, but them Davises ain't here."

"When will they be back?"

"I don't know. They been gone three year next Spring. They sold out."

She eyed him distrustfully. The baby whimpered and blindly fumbled at her flat breasts.

"I reckon," she repeated, "as how you can have the room. George, he's asleep."

From somewhere in the dimness behind the stairs a child's thin voice began suddenly to wail.

The woman turned fiercely—

"Shet up that bawlin,' you!"

The child muffled its crying.

"I don't know what's the matter with it," she said to Norman, though still eying him doubtfully. "It yells all the time, and wakes George up. Then he wants to larrup it." Fiercely, with a note in her voice that gave Norman a shiver: "I'd like to just see any man hit one of my chilern!"

Norman felt a little uncomfortable under the glow of her gray eyes. She was worn and bedraggled and all her strength seemed to be in her gaze. She still had something on her mind and, without friendliness, told him of it.

"George"—there was a gleam of defiance in this—"George is all right but he ain't got enough backbone. He quit farmin' an' come to town. I hate it here. It's too crowded."

She led the way up the stairs and opened the door of a room that had probably not been opened in many days. She looked with sullen stiffness at his bow and "I thank you," as he stood in the door when she was leaving; and she left without a word.

The child below started yelling again in a way that must surely have troubled George's dreams if it did not end his slumbers; and Norman heard from afar the shrill, impatient: "Shet up! Shet up, you!"

Norman raised the window and went to the washstand. The pitcher was empty. When he lifted it from the bowl he found a black ring of fine dust that had settled about the base of the pitcher. He decided not to go for water.

He sat down on the bed, covered with a heavy patchwork quilt. The very weight of this was enough to tire one who sought rest under it. The surface was gritty to the touch. The winds drove sandy dust everywhere.

He felt depressed and ashamed of himself for the depression. For years he had been telling himself with much inner pride that he was one of these people, and by birthright belonged to this country. There was now no thought of returning, no swift shadow of a wish that he had not come; but he strongly wished that he felt differently about what he had found.

He remained sitting in aimless meditation for some time; then with a glance at his watch decided to see about his suitcases and trunks.

When he reached the office he heard voices through the open door that led from the passageway into the saloon; and he looked in.

An angular sleepy-eyed man, with tousled hair, wearing suspenders over a faded blue shirt and a dirty white apron around his waist leaned across the bar and talked with two men who were obviously farmers; evidently father and son, for one was a mere boy, and had the same sort of Adam's apple, lean features, and home-made blue shirt dotted with red.

Norman was unnoticed.

The bartender, who heard more news than any other man, talked:

"— coyotes and buzzards had cleaned his bones slick as a dawg's tooth, an' his horse's too. No tellin' how long he'd been there. But I hear tell he's been missin' nigh three weeks or more."

"Who done it, you reckon?" asked the young listener, his tone conveying the hint that he had suspicions of his own.

"Who done it!" the bartender repeated contemptuously. "I allow that no man what's got half my sense, the which I ain't braggin' is overmuch, won't make no guesses right out loud. *Somebody* seems to be doin' a ——'s plenty not more 'n a hundred miles or so from here. But I ain't mentionin' of no names."

The younger man, who evidently understood the cryptic reference well enough, cursed bitterly.

His father dropped a hard sun-burned fist on the bar and said savagely:

"We won't move on! Not for 'Red' Allisters, 'Black' Renalds, or nobody! Us nesters has got the right here. And by——, we stay!"

"We stay by ——!" repeated the boy, setting his lean face firmly.

The bartender nudged the whisky bottle, and all three poured out a drink and tossed it off. Water was not served as a chaser in Martinez.

"There was a hole right dead plumb in the middle of his forehead"—the bartender raised a fingertip to the center of his own forehead to illustrate—"an' his saddle an' bridle an' belt an' gun was all there. The clothes was tore all to —— o' course."

"He was a good feller, that boy," said the father. "He didn't like the way things are goin' on."

"That old Renalds is a ——" again the young man swore hotly.

The father and bartender exchanged quick, half-startled glances.

Norman drew back from the door, out of sight. Something hot seemed to have passed through his body, leaving him weak. He continued to listen.

A long pause.

Then the bartender, with an off-hand manner and change of tone, said:

"I hear 'Fuzzy' Butler ain't been seen around in these parts none lately. Fuzzy he come from Texas. He allowed as how he was always goin' back there ag'in some day. 'Pears like he's gone in a hurry. Fuzzy he was shore one good shot if you was inclined to take his word for it. He shore was. Like some other folks he packed two guns."

"Uh-huh," said the father.

"He lit out in a hurry seems like," the bartender went on, and all of those who listened knew that the bartender had his own well-defined opinion of why Fuzzy had "lit out"; though he added: "I wonder what could have took him all of a sudden-like for to travel?"

"Bob Standish had a pile of friends, that's why!" said the lean-faced boy. "They could shoot just as fast and straight as what Fuzzy Butler could. And Red Allister and Black Renalds has got a heap plenty of killers left to do more of their dirty work! Red Allister knowed that Bob would shore kill him—and Butler was an Allister man."

Norman felt sickened. He gripped his

walking-stick as if holding to something that would steady him. Then with the vague, half-conscious knowledge that it would be better not to let these men suspect that he had overheard, he unsteadily climbed the stairs and sat down at the top. He felt dizzy. In a way he had hardly known his brother, but a leaden sense of loss bore down on him. "You're a good kid" came as a faint echo into his thoughts, and "Good-by Pet" sounded like the farewell of the night before.

He tried to think, but all of his thoughts mingled confusedly. Red Allister was Renalds' right-hand man, and put in charge of Renalds' 44 Circle some years after Renalds took charge of the larger Star Y holdings. He dimly remembered that Allister had borne a bad name, though through somehow rescuing Renalds when he was cornered in a fight Allister had got into Renalds' friendship. Norman recalled that Colonel Standish had never liked Allister, but he had liked Renalds.

After a time Norman again went down the stairs, and into the saloon. The men were still talking, but they now turned toward him and stared.

"Howdy," said the bartender, whose calling was hospitable toward both friends and strangers.

The farmers looked at him with straight-eyed curiosity and the suspicion that people of the land in those days had for a stranger in good clothes.

"I am stopping here at Davis's tonight and——"

Norman stopped, growing prickly with anger, his face becoming pale, for the young man had snorted, and was stamping the floor with his heavy shoes as he bent over, doubling up, with "haw-haw-haw!" His father smiled broadly with a sidelong stare at the bartender, who looked severe.

"Davis's! Davis's!" the bartender jeered.

Then he impersonally *blank-blankety-blanked* the Davises, and concluded with the weariness of one who has often explained:

"This hain't Davis's no more. This is George Welch's—I'm George—an' the long-eared snaggle-toothed pup what told you this was Davis's ain't no better'n a sheep dawg. I ain't blamin' you. You ain't been here long enough yit to git some o' God's country under your toe-nails, but them as knows better still call *my* hotel Davis's. Have a drink, young feller!"

He shot a glass down the bar, pushing the whisky bottle after it.

Norman smiled slightly. He knew the humor of the country well enough to see that, if for no other reason, "Davis's" had been perpetuated to stir up harmless anger in George.

"Thank you," Norman said, and barely covered the bottom of his glass. Then: "I'll not make the mistake again, Mr. Welch."

He pushed the bottle away. All the men soberly eyed the smallness of his drink.

"He can't swim," said the farmer boy. "An' he ain't takin' no chances."

"Wally"—the father spoke reprovingly—"you go round and hitch up them broncs. We got to be draggin' outa here. It's a long ways to home."

"I have some baggage at the station," said Norman. "I would like to get some one to help me with it."

"I got a crippled nigger here," said George, looking about.

Then for a time no one spoke. The bartender used the end of his apron to rub the bar. The father pulled out a corn-cob pipe and felt about in his hip pocket for tobacco. Wally, who could not read, pretended to study the label on the whisky bottle, at the same time twisting a bracelet of braided horsehair; but furtively he was watching Norman. Then:

"I reckon as how I'll give you a hand, mister."

Without waiting Norman's reply, he started for the door, stepping heavily in hob-nailed shoes, their soles an inch thick.

Norman followed, and tried to walk beside him; but Wally hurried on, apparently trying to avoid having Norman by his side. Norman could see that this was merely shy awkwardness.

When they reached the station the telegraph operator, sleep still in his eyes, had just come on duty. He was a thin, sickly man, full of stomach trouble. The best part of eighteen hours a day he spent at the clicking wires. The west-bound, with right of way before it, went through, never stopping unless to drop passengers. Even the mail sack was snatched by a hook from a post beside the track where the sack was fastened. So Keyes, the operator, snatched a little sleep in the middle of the day. At night freights came through, and the operator needed to be alert with signals, to convey orders, make reports and see that trains not supposed to go through were side-tracked.

"Come in on the one-ten, huh?" Keyes said gruffly to Norman, as though people were not supposed to come in on the one-ten, while he slept.

Norman said "Yes," and went quickly to his trunks.

The operator looked after him, staring soberly.

With a little furtiveness Norman tore away the tags on the trunks that gave his name, and put them into his pocket. He had no really clear idea of why he did that. Somehow it was connected with his dead half-brother and the wish that no one might know that Renalds was his uncle. Norman was in a nebulous state of doubt when he could not believe, but could not quite disbelieve, what he had overheard of Renalds, who had always filled him with a little awe, being a strange silent man, dark of feature and strong of body. Norman had never quite liked this uncle, and now he did not want to be recognized in Martinez as his nephew.

"Let us just roll these trunks over to the station," said Norman, "I'll attend to them tomorrow."

Wally picked up one end of the larger trunk and waited for Norman to take the other. He took it, staggered under the weight, stumbled, almost fell, and dropped the trunk.

"It's heavy," said Norman, flushing.

"Is it?" asked Wally.

He grinned, then walked off with the trunk, dragging it bangety-bang-bang after him, and jerked it up and on end beside the station.

The second trunk, being smaller, Norman again took hold to help.

Wally said, "Let go a minute," and when Norman let go, Wally heaved it on his shoulder and staggered off, proud of his strength.

Then Wally picked up both the suitcases and started off.

"I'll take one," said Norman.

"Naw. It's easier totin' two," and on he walked.

The suitcases were heavy. His arms ached. But he would have let them be pulled from their sockets before pausing to rest.

He carried them clear into Norman's room. Norman thanked him and offered a dollar. Wally looked at the tempting dollar, for money was scarce, but he shook his head, at the same time nervously twisting the hair bracelet on his wrist.

"Naw. Fer totin' them things? Huh."

"Will you have a drink with me?"

"Shore. An' when you've followed a plow much as me, you won't be needin' help to tote your Sunday duds. Me an' Paw we took up a section out southeast of Reddin's. Renalds had all that country fenced. He's still got it fenced. When me an' Paw want to come to town we cut through the wire an' come. Maw an' Jess set out front with a Winchester waitin' till we git back. We may have to cut through the fence to git back 'cause it ain't always healthy like to come back the way we come out—an' it ain't healthy to try to stop us neither."

His light blue eyes glistened.

"Do you nesters have much trouble with the cowmen?"

Wally sat down on Norman's bed and hugged a knee.

"We're the only nesters inside that fence—" he said it proudly. "Down South from the Santee Divide up, all 44 Circle country—Black Renalds he owns the 44 Circle outfit too—they run off nesters. Red Allister does it. Up this way they run 'em off too if they git in too clost. But they ain't never bothered us much more'n givin' warning and sayin' what they was goin' to do. Bob Standish he was our friend."

"Did you know Bob Standish?"

"Shore I knowed him." Watchfully: "What do you know of him?"

"I've heard him mentioned, and nothing but good spoken."

"Then you ain't been around Black Renalds. Paw he don't believe in talkin', but I do. An' I tell you old Renalds had him killed. First he didn't like Bob, and then he wanted to git hold of the ranch for that city half-brother of Bob's. Everybody out here knows they've been tryin' for years to beat Bob out of his share. An Renalds he's been throwin' Star Y cows down on to the 44 Circle range. Red Allister he's been helpin' hisself to Star Y cows too—puttin' the Lazy A on 'em. Everybody knows——"

Then to Norman's astonishment he found that Wally Frazier knew, and declared it to be common knowledge of the range, all about Colonel Standish, his will, his two sons, his widow, and Renalds.

In the West of that not so very long ago, what happened was never forgotten, it passed repeatedly from mouth to mouth; newcomers heard of it, talked it over a thousand times, passed it on to new neighbors, and as long as the principals remained in the country their history was kept at the tongue's end of those who knew them.

"But you come to town unarmed," said Norman, when Wally had finished the history and paused in his recital of the nesters' wrongs.

"You mean we don't pack no guns around while we are in town. Nobody ain't goin' to open on us where there are a lot of witnesses as long as we *don't* pack guns. It's out where nobody can see who does it that we keep our eyes peeled.

"Renalds he's got a lot o' killers ridin' for him, but even them on the Star Y liked Bob Standish. Bob he was jest a big kid, but he could outshoot an' outride any man an' they all liked him purty well. That Fuzzy Butler used to ride for the Star Y, an' Bob, he run him off. He backed Fuzzy up in a corner onct over to Reddin's an' dared him to draw. I bet if Fuzzy ever meets Bud Russell, or even Buck Blevins, that Fuzzy'll be dead afore a cat could spit."

Norman made inquiry as to who was Bud Russell and Buck Blevins.

"Bud Russell he was Bob's side pardner. Jest a kid Bud is, but he shore liked Bob Standish. An' Buck Blevins he's one o' Renalds's gun men. Jest a young feller too. This here is a joke. When we first took up the land, Buck he was sent over to tell us to git. He come up a rarin' an' talkin' big—then he seen Jess."

Wally stopped and bent over as with the cramps to laugh.

"He seen Jess—haw-ha-ha! He got so perlite all of a sudden that he almost told us to stay sot jest where we was. Jess is shore purty as a picture book. After that Buck he rode over frequent to see if we was gittin' out of the country. Let's have that drink."

They went down and into the saloon.

George was alone and dozing head down on the bar. He looked up and said to Wally—

"You're paw's gone to hitch up."

"Whisky," said Wally.

Norman asked for beer.

"Ain't got no ice," said George. "This time o' year it don't pay to git in ice. Have some whisky."

Norman chose beer nevertheless; and George, invited to join them, took whisky and paused with the glass on its way to his mouth. The child was again wailing.

"Shut up that bawlin', can't you?" he shouted.

Then having drunk the whisky, he said to no one in particular:

"Yelps all the time, that kid. Can't keep nothin' on its stomik. What you s'pose makes 'em holler like that? Two-year-old and it bawls all the time. Maw says the milk don't agree with it, but shucks, I don't know. We tried both brands the Emporium's got."

Norman listened unhappily to both George and the child. He knew that here, in the midst of the cow country, there was nothing but tinned-milk for babies. He, however, as a child had been raised on pure-bred Jersey's milk—and gallons upon gallons, unused at the house, was poured daily to the hogs.

Colonel Standish had been more than a mere cattle man or rancher. He had maintained many interests, and had done everything in a large way, used immense sums of money in foresighted development and built up a baronial estate. He had dammed up a stream that ran wild down the mountains in the Spring and died down in a course lined with willows and cottonwoods, miles out on the plains, in the Summer. He used the natural bed for a deep irrigation ditch, deepening it with an army of mule-skinners and scrapers, and, following the guidance of surveyors, had run laterals that fed his fields. Orchards were planted, and the fruit rotted unpicked, for there was no market, or at least the market was too far away for perishables. A whole colony of amiable Mexicans, house servants and chore boys, lived in rich semi-idleness from the wasteful overflow of plenty.

The colonel had put in great pastures of rich alfalfa and broad acres of wheat; and the cattle men eyed his development with disapproval, declaring that it would ruin the range by showing the richness of the land to nesters. His deep wells, some of them artesian, had let it be known that water was available.

He had kept prize stock, partly for the love of thoroughbreds, and partly to breed up his stock; and massive short-horned

Hereford bulls were turned loose on the range and had sent a streak of blaze faces through his herds. But Jersey stock had to be petted, nursed in cool pastures up in the foothill valleys, and were held in unspeakable contempt by the cowboys, whose idea of a proper cow was a rangy long horn that could feed a week without water, then run a horse half to death before being turned.

OUTSIDE of the hotel there was now the hurried clatter of galloping horses, a shrill many-voiced *y-yi-hi-ee-oopee!*; and as Norman glanced out of the street door he saw a half-dozen riders passing through a flurry of dust. They stopped with violent suddenness, the horses flinging their heads high, and swung from saddles before the Horned Toad saloon. Some dropped their reins and strode with awkward stumbling into the saloon; two or three paused to weave the end of hackamores worn over their horses' bridles into slip knots at the hitching rack, then followed. Instantly the street was quiet again.

"Renalds' killers!" said Wally, and cursed them.

"You talk too blame much!" said George, with a trace of anxiety in his tone. "It ain't well to speak names in this country."

"You all may be afeard of Black Renalds an' his men. I ain't!"

"He's done some good fightin' in his day," George answered.

"Look who he's got doin' it for him now! Red Allister an' Jim Harvey."

Jim Harvey was the present Star Y foreman.

Presently Mr. Frazier appeared in the door.

"You be a-comin', Wally."

"See who's in town, Paw?"

"That ain't nothin' to do with us."

"Naw," said Wally. " 'By, stranger," he called at Norman, and with a long thumping stride went out.

Norman watched from the door as Wally and his father got into the wagon. As they drove away Wally threw many glances back toward the Horned Toad, but Frazier, slumped over, did not turn his head.

VI

NORMAN was nervously depressed, but he wanted to hear more. So, with the intention of drawing George out, he said—

"I judge that Wally doesn't like those Renalds men.",

George cocked a sleepy eye, regarded him for a time, then leaned wearily on the bar:

"We got one judge in this here interprisin' town, an' there ain't enough to keep him busy, so I allow he don't be wantin' no assistance. An' Wally's a danged kid what takes after his maw, who is a great woman to speak right out in meetin' and express herself fluid-like. I know women as a rule don't put no great store by them gifts of silence you've heard tell about, but Missus Frazier she cares less for 'em than most. Bob Standish he used to say that after he'd been out where it was lonesome-like an' was jest hankerin' for the dulcet sound of a human voice that he'd make for Frazier's just to git his ears full like a doggy makes for a water hole when its belly's bumpin' its ribs. Have a drink, young feller?"

Norman declined, but took a cigar and paid for two. George eyed the cigar that Norman pushed to him, picked it up, looked it over closely, then bit it half in two and began to chew. When he had the tobacco softened enough to resume speaking, he said casually—

"Right smart good country we got here, ain't it?"

Norman took up the name of Bob Standish, but George was wary; and in turn he hinted strongly at Norman's business, where he was from, how long he meant to stay. But George would not ask a direct question of a stranger. It wasn't manners.

But Norman had needed to give a name, so he said, slipping unconsciously into the idiom of the country—

"Folks call me Norman."

And George called him Mr. Norman.

Supper was served at five o'clock. Long before that time some of the storekeepers, business being slack, came to drink and talk. They were middle-aged men, in shirt sleeves, slow of movement, and sociably indifferent to each other. They had met at breakfast, they had met at noon, they had probably talked across the street to one another through the day, and most certainly they had stood together at the Emporium, which had the post-office, while waiting for mail, of which there was always very little.

Now, on coming in they looked at Norman, eying his youth, his clothes, most of all his light walking-stick, which he knew better than to carry but would not discard because he felt that it would be weakness to be influenced by the questioning amused glances.

He recognized one or two of these men, but they did not know him. In appearance he resembled his mother, and Mrs. Standish had never been well known, even by sight, in Martinez.

He sat apart with an old newspaper and read bits of sentences while listening intently to the slow, unemotional tones of such as talked. He could not overhear much that was said, but enough to know that they were talking of Bob Standish, his bones, his saddle and bridle and gun, that were found in an arroyo about thirty miles south of the Standish ranch house.

Norman overheard that these men thought it a bitter thing that old Tom McCullough, who for years had been the Star Y superintendent, had found the skeleton and knew the saddle and guns at a glance.

If there was ever one man who loved another, it was McCullough who had loved Bob Standish. Bob had been like a son to him.

McCullough had a granddaughter.

Norman remembered her as a wild motherless girl, dark and pretty, who wore divided skirts and stole from the corral horses she was forbidden to ride. As a child he had been half-afraid of her. She was three or four years older than he, and with half a chance had tormented him in a way that was both exasperating and not wholly unpleasing. She had not been afraid of anything or anybody; and every time she was ordered not to do something she took it as a strong hint that there would be a lot of fun in doing just that.

Mrs. Standish, after some attempts to help her choose more maidenly ways, had regarded her with a cool uneasiness, never speaking ill of the girl and never trying to have her punished—but she did not like to have her near.

Kate McCullough had whole-heartedly and avowedly loved two people; her grandfather and Bob Standish, and one of these she sometimes obeyed, but it was rarely the grandfather.

Norman remembered McCullough as a lean, wrinkled, silent, slightly bent and hard-bodied man; one of the few men to be found at his age who had been a cowman all his life. He had ridden from below the Mexican border to the Dakotas and back again, driving lean herds to the fattening northward range, fighting Indians and rustlers. He was a thorough cowman, and, though he had known little of the farming and fancy stock raising Colonel Standish introduced, the colonel had made him superintendent, choosing a man whom he could trust thoroughly.

It had been at Colonel Standish's suggestion that McCullough, who had a plainsman's hatred for a fence and contempt for a plough, had filed on a choice section of the foothill range used by the Star Y.

McCullough had protested:

"Why, colonel, what do I want with that there land what is yours? I'd feel like I was turning nester, and Lord knows, if he's about his business as the parsons say, there's more of them comin' into this here country now than's wanted."

Norman had been with his father at the time, and rode on a small swift pony under a gaily-stamped boy's saddle. The wild girl, also on horseback, hovered at his flank, furtively tapping his pony with a quirt's tip, wanting to see Norman display a little horsemanship.

Norman had therefore not listened very closely to the conversation between his father and McCullough; but he knew that the colonel had pointed out that this was a choice location, with water, good land for farming, and that some nester might soon be on it and object to Star Y cattle grazing there.

"The range will go. It is only a matter of time," said Colonel Standish.

"Well, colonel, I'll do what you say. But as long as I live, it's Star Y range."

But when Renalds took charge of the Standish ranch McCullough was dismissed. Some quarrel over Allister, it was said. For many years he had saved his money, with an eye on the girl's future, and owned quite a bunch of cows which ran with the Standish stock. Then, being dismissed by Renalds, he had turned nester, fenced his land, and held it at the point of a Winchester, much to the disgust of the new Star Y cowboys. But more than this, McCullough's example had drawn in other nesters, and there were occasional killings, and frequently shots were fired between the grangers and cowmen.

Norman, now listening to the slow mumble of voices, learned that McCullough had been riding out after a stray horse—he lost many horses, as did other nesters—when he had come upon the picked bones of a horse and man.

Norman also gathered that everybody all along had taken it for granted that Bob Standish and Kate McCullough were to be married some day—"jest as soon as ever Bob jarred loose his share of the ranch."

There was no doubt as to where the sympathy of these men lay, and though they knew one another better than brothers, Norman did not overhear anything like a free opinion expressed among them; but he did perceive an odd inflection, followed often by a noticable silence, at any direct reference to his uncle. Also he did hear the statement:

"Red Allister he said onct that Mr. Renalds means to leave ever'thing to that nephew o' his. Them Renaldses always great hands to stick to their own blood. An' with Bob gone that city feller gets the whole shebang."

Then there was silence and a wise nodding of heads, with understanding glances cast back and forth.

A crippled negro, in overalls and undershirt, suddenly appeared at the door opening in from the office, and though one word would have told all that he had to say, he beat a gong furiously. This gong was a thin bar of iron bent into a triangle, with a string attached by which he held it. Having informed the patrons of the bar that supper was ready, he went out of the door and from the front porch gave the same news to the town.

The men filed out of the saloon, into the narrow hall, and on back toward the dining-room. Some paused to wash; others merely glanced into the cracked mirror and passed the nearly hairless brush over their heads.

Norman went into the dining-room. There were two or three smaller tables with chairs. The regular boarders each had a place at one of these tables. There were other long tables, bare of top, with benches.

George left the bar in charge of the negro boy and also came to supper. The men seated themselves at the smaller tables.

"Mr. Norman," said George by way of introduction to the table. "He come on the one-ten."

There was no further introduction. The men gave slow glances at Norman as though they had not seen him before and began, without talk, to eat.

The food, excepting the dessert, was on the table. There was beef stew, thick with potatoes and meat, coffee, bread, olemargarine, and stewed tomatoes with something that looked like lumps of fat in them; this, however, was pieces of white bread. For dessert there would be stewed dried-apples.

Mrs. Welch passed rapidly with a gaunt determined air back and forth from the kitchen. She had little to say and never smiled. The two year old baby was in a chair at a far end of the dining-room, and splattered its tin spoon in a bowl of canned milk into which bread had been broken. Flies bothered it. Now and then it paused to wail.

"Shet up, you!" Mrs. Welch would yell, not always looking around.

The room was hot and full of flies in spite of the paper-fringed sticks that stood in a corner. With these sticks they were every few days chased out of the dining-room. Here and there about the room were saucers of dirty-looking water near which a few inexperienced flies had died; the others, apparently warned by the fate of their fellows, kept clear of the poisoned water.

The men ate rapidly. George talked some, and was at most answered with a few mumbled words. A stranger was among them; one of whom they knew nothing.

Presently there was a stamping of feet, and clattering jingle of spurs, the quick short phrases of rollicking voices, then six cowboys, their hair shining with water, with handkerchiefs pulled about their necks so that the knot was in front, broad hats in their hands, came in.

The leader, a chunky, square-built man, with narrow eyes, a long mustache, wearing a plain dark vest, corduroy trousers tucked into boots, and gun that swung low with thongs at the end of the holster tied around his thigh, gave a slow impersonal look all about and nodded to those who nodded to him. He followed Mrs. Welch to a table.

Some of the men with him quietly exchanged nods with those who were eating, then ranged themselves along the bench beside Jim Harvey, their foreman.

Mrs. Welch, with a more determined air than ever, hurried about, dropping cups, knives, forks, plates, then dashed in and out of the kitchen, bearing a tray loaded with food.

"I didn't know you-all was in town, Mr. Harvey," she said as she placed a big dish of stew before him.

"The which is all right, Mrs. Welch," said Harvey, helping himself to the stew and pushing it toward the next man. "We just rode in."

"Buck he ain't here yit," said a man. "He was riding of a hoss the which he thought could travel some. But he ain't here yit."

All of the men grinned broadly.

"Like —— I ain't! Naildriver could walk back'ards and beat that swayback, spavin, knock-kneed crow's meat you call a hoss."

"Oh, hello, Buck," said the man, glancing down the row of faces toward the young man at the end. "I didn't know you was come yit."

"I knowed you was blind in one eye and couldn't see out of t'other," Buck answered.

After that they ate in silence, at least as far as words went; but there was clattering of tableware, rattling of long-shanked spurs as they moved their feet about, noisy gulping of strong hot coffee. Frequently one of them paused to wipe his face. The room was hot, the food hot.

The men were seated in a line facing the door. As one after another of the town's merchants finished his stewed apples, he pushed his chair back, arose and left without speaking.

Norman closely observed the cowboys as well as he could without being too pointed in his staring.

Harvey was more plainly dressed and older than the others. There was no superfluous trappings on him. He was quiet, reserved, at ease, and Norman did not see any shadow of the dark villainy that he had rather expected after the way Wally had talked.

All wore guns, for those were troublous days when the nesters carried Winchesters, and there was much hard feeling.

Buck was plainly the youngest, and more of a dandy than the others. His red handkerchief was of silk; his vest of deerskin, bright with intricate and many-colored beading. His hat band was studded with silver conchas; his leather chaps were fringed and lined with conchas.

Next to Buck was a tall lean man, thin of face, sharp of nose, wide mouth and little to say. He was addressed as Slim.

All were dark of face, sun-blackened; none of them was fat; and two or three were lean; and their faces, though hard, were not unlike the faces of the Star Y men Norman had seen in his boyhood. He almost felt resentful toward Wally Frazier.

Norman left the table and started for the barroom. He hoped to overhear more conversation.

In the dim passage he met the telegraph operator, hurrying with an anxious air to his late supper. Keyes did not speak, but as he passed eyed Norman with dyspeptic disfavor.

VII

THE crippled negro had disappeared. George, full of stomach, looked more sleepy than ever. A few men in one group leaned against the bar, talking without apparent interest.

Norman caught the names: "Harvey—Renalds;" and seeing the slow gaze of the men turn toward him, he passed on to the table where he had been pretending to read, and again picked up the newspaper.

It was growing dim. The crippled negro limped through the barroom bearing a bucket, and disappeared. George lazily lighted the two bracket-lamps behind the bar, and called loudly for Limpy. No answer. Then swearing without feeling at the lazy, loafin', no 'count nigger, he came himself from behind the bar, stepped on a chair and lighted a large lamp that hung from the ceiling.

The cowboys came stamping in. The restraint they had felt in the dining-room was gone. They laughed, passed remarks, swore, and all in the highest good nature greeted the town merchants familiarly. Only Harvey was silent, apparently unwatchful, but alert. They lined up and drank, joked, and stood around waiting for somebody to suggest something that would be fun.

Meyers of the Emporium, was telling an endless story. Some listened, having nothing else to do, as though they had not heard it before.

"Well," said one man in a slow unconcerned way, but pitching his voice to a key that let every one know that he was going to start a little something, "who'd a thunked this mornin' when Harvey piled us out that we was goin' to have supper at Davis's?"

Then silence. Not a man moved. There wasn't a scrape of spur or scratch of match.

They were waiting for George to start; and George started. He cussed them there Davises from the time the first little Davis baby got to earth, and on down the line into the remote future; then he impersonally started in on half-baked idjits what couldn't learn in three year that an enterprisin' citizen by the name of Welch had took over the city's leading hotel and made it worthy of its metropolitan name.

The offender humbly begged George's pardon and allowed that after such a teachin' he wouldn't soon ever again forget himself.

After that there were drinks at the bar, much laughter, great sympathy expressed for George and his struggle to overcome the blight of Davises.

But soon again there was the ominous restlessness of men eager for fun.

Somebody suggested a poker game, but before critical objections as to the motive of this suggestion had died away, Norman became sensitively aware that Buck, in all of his range finery, was standing open-mouthed some ten feet from him and staring. Then:

"Here fellers, here at last is one o' them Galliloopeses you hear tell about!"

"Naw, that ain't a Galliloopes, Buck. That's a young Dingus."

"It ain't," insisted Buck, walking slowly around Norman's chair. "It's a Galliloopes, an' a crippled one at that. See its cane?"

The cowboys came forward, gravely inspected the cane, shook puzzled heads.

"I hear tell o' them Galliloopeses, Buck. But this here ignorance o' mine is shore profound. Jest what they be?"

"You eat 'em like an orange," said the authoritative Buck. "Pilgrims sometimes throw the skins out o' train windows. I 'low one bit into this Galliloopes an' found it too green. So he flung her out."

Harvey, back to the bar, leaned on an elbow, without comment. Norman, growing red and pale and red again, looked hopefully toward him. Harvey saw the glance but said nothing.

"I tell you it's a Dingus, Buck."

"Its feet 's too splayed for a Dingus."

"No they ain't. I seen them Dinguses the which left tracks broad as the side of a steer."

"I wonder is it alive?"

"Dunno," said Buck, pulling away the table from Norman. "But we'll soon find out!"

In a flash Buck's gun came out, roared at the floor before Norman's feet.

Norman sprang up, pale, rigid, angered, glaring.

"Dance, Galliloopes, dance!" yelled Buck, and shot again.

"No!" Norman fairly screamed, outraged, and the light walking-stick came up, whistled, and streaked the side of Buck's face with its blow.

Buck staggered back, half-blinded; his gun came up, but was caught and held down by "Slim" Simmons, who stood nearest.

"Careful, Buck—the kid ain't armed!" said Simmons.

Buck yielded reluctantly. Simmons gently took the gun from Buck's hand, but jammed it back into the gun's own holster.

Buck was furious, mad beyond the use of words. He lifted his hand and felt of his welted cheek, then stared at the faint smear of red on his fingers.

"I'll beat your —— head off for that!" he cried, and began frantically to unbuckle his belt.

He swung holster and gun from him, not looking to see who took it as he cried at Norman—

"I'll fix you, you —— city dude!"

Keyes, the telegraph operator, disturbed at his late supper, had rushed in to see what about that shooting; and he saw. As Buck braced himself to strike, Keyes yelled:

"Buck—Buck Blevins! Don't! That's Renalds' nephew!"

Buck's fist fell to his side as, open-mouthed, he turned toward Keyes. The room was quiet. Men looked from Keyes to Norman, and again at Keyes. Harvey took a step forward, eying Norman; he asked in a hard, quiet tone.

"Are you?"

Norman's throat was dry and tight. He did not try to speak, but stood nervously tense, pale, his dark eyes blazing.

Keyes answered with sour eagerness:

"His name was on them trunks. From New York. An' ain't I been sendin' telegrams from Renalds to him?"

Some of the merchants who had sat at the table with Norman looked questioningly toward George.

"He tol' me his name was Norman," said George in a voice at once injured and apologetic.

"'Tis!" shouted Keyes. "Norman Standish!"

"The ——!" commented George a little sheepishly, feeling that he had been taken in. "Have a drink, gents!"

No attention was given this hospitable suggestion.

"Buck, you shore have put your foot in it, an' that's a fact," said a friendly voice.

"I shore have," Buck repeated, but without any strong accent of regret.

Harvey stood before Norman—

"Are you Norman Standish?"

"Yes."

Harvey looked him over; then—

"Buck, seein' as how you have made some mistakes in more ways than one——"

Harvey's eyes looked pointedly at the red streak on Buck's face.

"—I guess you'd better offer the young man here a little apology."

Buck shook his head dispiritedly:

"Nope. They got 'o wear calico afore I beg their pardon. You go put a skirt on him an' I'll get down on my knees. But to no —— man I won't. No!"

Those about him did not take the remark as being appropriate. They looked soberly at Buck. Stared at Norman.

"How in —— did I know he weren't no regular tenderfoot? He shore looks it!"

And Buck, having reassured himself with another glance toward Norman that it was a mistake that anybody might make, strode with clatter of long-shanked, big-spiked spurs to the bar, poured himself a drink, threw it down his throat, then turned to Harvey, saying:

"I'd reckon as how I'd like my time. I got an old aunt with the hiccoughs. I think I'll go nurse her some."

"That's the stuff, Buck. That's the way to talk to 'em!" cried a half-drunken voice.

This was from a fellow named Mentone, a big swarthy man, formerly a railroad employee, who had for some weeks been loafing around town, mostly in the Toad Saloon, where he cursed the railroad company on some more or less vague complaint, which was connected with his discharge.

But there was no smiling among the other men. Little Meyers of the Emporium shook his head soberly.

"Dot ain't no way to talk, Buck—not mit your foodt in it like what you've got."

"You'll have to see Renalds about your time," said Harvey, quietly.

At that several of the cowboys shook their heads a little. They knew that Buck, through his love of finery, was in Renalds' debt. A two-hundred dollar saddle had put the reckless forty-a-month cowpuncher deeply in the hole some months before.

"Well, you know he ain't around the ranch, an' won't be back for some time," said Buck with an aggrieved air.

"You can wait till he comes back," said Harvey.

"I wouldn't sell that saddle for no —— man," Buck declared, denouncing the thought that had come to him suggesting a way out of Renalds' debt.

"An' don't you 'pologize, Buck. Don't you 'pologize!" Mentone shouted.

"And don't you open your mouth again," said the tall lean Simmons quietly to Mentone.

After that the men stood about, saying little, standing quietly, and let Buck struggle with his own dark thoughts, though plainly he had their sympathy. He had not only picked on the wrong fellow and got a disgracing welt across the face, but this man was Renalds' nephew, the favorite with Renalds; and Black Renalds was a dangerous man to cross in any way. Buck couldn't get his time; he couldn't pay up and quit; and he appeared to be meditating on the idea of quitting without settling the debt.

Norman spoke to Harvey—

"Mr. Renalds is not at the ranch?"

"No," said Harvey; just that, but looking steadily.

"An' —— shore has been poppin' o' late," said a cowboy who was some distance away and spoke to no one in particular.

"It shore has," another agreed, and took a jangling stride toward the bar.

"Nesters," said George, sympathetically beginning to scatter glasses along the bar.

"Rustlers!"

"Rustlers!" George repeated, for a moment losing his weary air, and looking with pointed inquiry toward Harvey.

"You're doin' the talkin," said Harvey toward the cowboy.

'Waal," he drawled, a little self-consciously, "rustlers for some time now has been troublin' the nesters, which ain't so bad—them bein' nesters. But cowmen—there was some mighty good hosses in our North pasture. Part o' the herd bred to that mustang stallion of ourn what you all know as Thunder, and to them Kentucky mares which the old colonel had. There ain't no faster hoofs on ary man's range than them hosses. An' one night they was there in the North pasture, and the next morning there was eight or ten of 'em gone. We rode twenty-mile o' fence a-fore we found where they'd left at; but there weren't no break in the wire. It had been cut an' fastened up ag'in. Considerate o' them fellers, weren't it now? Run off the best string o' hosses on the place, then tie back the fence to keep the rest o' the herd to home. —— thoughtful I call it."

Those listening glanced for confirmation toward Harvey. The merchants of Martinez were used to being tricked into great interest and a little excitement by some cowpuncher's slow recital of important happenings, only to discover at the end of the story that he was having a joke.

Harvey, who never joked, now nodded.

"Go on, Windy," said a cowboy. "Tell it all. You ain't but jest begun."

"I been goin' long enough to have a thirst," said Windy, perhaps not unaware of the consideration that is readily given to one whose interesting news is still unfinished.

The blacksmith of Martinez, a burly, swarthy man, also something of a horse-trader, dropped a gold piece on the bar and silently waved a thick arm. The men strung themselves out along the bar.

Norman, hesitating to accept an uncertain welcome, was about to leave. Harvey touched his arm and said—

"Come up."

"Here's to you, Blackie," said Windy, holding up his glass in acknowledgment of the blacksmith's generosity.

Then resuming his story, Windy went on:

"Slim Simmons an' Buck here found that there break in the wire, the which them blankety-blanks had considerately repaired for us. They followed the trail an' she hit straight for Turges Cañon. It was dark when they got to the cañon, so they quit, then they come back that night.

"Harvey here the nex' morning he looked up old Sawyer, him as is varmint-killing for the Star Y—been doin' jest that as you all know for twenty year. He can trail a hawk by the mark its shadder makes on the ground, then shoot out its right eye without touchin' nary a hair of its head or otherwise hurtin' of it much, the which I allows is fair shootin' with an ol' rifle like his'n.

"Y'see, as you all know, it was Sawyer who creased that there black mustang stallion, Thunder, and brung him in. So Sawyer, you all might say, had a sort of proprietory interest in them hosses, the same as which he's sort o' claimed in the whole danged ranch for twenty year, an' what more time he's been trampin' the range an' them there mountains that he knows better'n I know the inside o' our bunk house.

"Harvey here he wants to send along a couple o' us fellers, but ol' Sawyer he won't hear o' it. He's al'us lived alone an' worked alone, an' he allows as how he don't want no company. So he rode off on that rattlebone bronc o' his'n, sayin' in a day or two he'd be back an' tell where them there hosses is, and where them as is curious can find the *re*-mains of them rustlers—varmint killin' being his work on the Star Y. That was two week come tomorrer."

Windy paused, as if his story was finished.

Some one thoughtfully passed the bottle. He drank, replaced his glass and remained silent.

"An' then?" said an encouraging voice.

"We ain't got that fer yit," said Windy, pausing.

The listeners looked from one to another doubtfully, beginning to suspect a joke. No one liked to rush in with questions and draw the laughter down on his head.

But little Meyers had too much curiosity for silence—

"Go on Windy, my bhoy."

"Well, Sawyer, he ain't come back yit."

Silence. The feeling was that the rustlers had got old Sawyer. Turges Cañon was a bad place to go into if somebody happened to be there that wanted to keep a fellow out.

Sawyer was well known by sight in Martinez.

Originally, it was said, he came from Tennessee; he had been a plainsman, scout, Indian fighter of the old days, and was still a "long hair." A tall straight man, no one hardly guessed at his age. He wore long hair and a long beard, and carried a single-shot rifle with a long, octagonal barrel. His clothes were of deerskin, nearly indestructible; and for years, answering to no man, though in the employ of the Star Y, moving about as he pleased he had warred on the wolves, coyotes, mountain cats, and bears that had once been a menace to the range.

With traps, poison and rifle, he kept at his work, contemptuous of even the scanty society of the range, silent, inhospitable, tramping from place to place with the slow tireless walk of the old hunter, usually followed by a bronco bearing his meager outfit, occasionally riding bareback on a gentle, sad-eyed pony. Since Colonel Standish's death there had been but two men who could get a civil answer out of him; old McCullough and Bob Standish.

Sometimes Sawyer came to town; but he never drank and he never talked, and his keen narrow old gray eyes looked with unanswerable directness at any one who tried to start a friendly conversation, to draw him out.

It was said that he had once served as a scout with Colonel Standish when the colonel was a young man.

"But that ain't all—not by a —— of a sight it ain't," said Windy, who saw that his audience was beginning to turn to one another and exchange non-committal opinions.

This statement brought them around with a jerk, and they listened interrogatingly.

"Three days ago—that'll be Thursday last—I was over toward the cañon with Slim Simmons here, throwing back some cows that jest naturally hankered to get up in the mountains, when cross the hill from where we was cussin' them cows we see what looks like to be some smoke, an' we lights out —— -for-leather to take a look. There ain't none too much feed on them foothills this time o' year without fire comin' in.

"When we gits up where we can take a look what do we see but two men moseyin' along like they had more time than they needed after a bunch o' cows, the same bein' headed straight for the cañon,. same as where them hosses was drove. An' them fellers was a-ridin' two of them hosses!"

Exclamations broke out at this.

"Me an' Slim wasn't carrying Winchesters or we might have spoke more illuminatin'ly to them fellers. As it was we rode down after 'em so fast some o' the hair blowed plumb off our hosses—but shucks, old Thunder hisself couldn't have cotched up with them gran'-children o' his. We didn't get nigher 'n a half-mile to 'em, so o' course them blankety-blanks couldn't hear none o' our personal opinion. Slim here he was plumb garrulous in expressin' of hisself.

"And," concluded Windy, "now you gents has all listened patiently. Have a drink!"

Conversation broke lose right and left, with vague guesses and no mention of names.

Norman started to leave the barroom. The drinks were coming too frequently, the talk was too general and impersonal for him to hear anything of further interest.

Harvey held him for a moment:

"Mr. Renalds has gone clear plumb to Kansas City to attend a cattlemen's convention. He ain't no hand to tell folks his business in anything, but he told me he might not be back for some time. I am sendin' him a telegram about them rustlers. Was you thinkin' of goin' out to the ranch soon?"

"Yes," said Norman. "But I'll manage all right. If somebody comes in with a wagon I'd like to have my baggage taken out. But I know the road to the ranch all right, Mr. Harvey."

"It's changed some since you used it. We're ridin' early on a roundabout way—headin' over toward Bald Rock to make inquiries about rustlers. I'll leave a man to show you the road. 'Night."

He turned away, and Norman, ready to protest that he did not need anybody to show him the way, hesitated a little, then went on.

As he climbed the stairs he heard both babies crying, and Mrs. Welch's shrill, exasperated:

"Shet up! Oh, shet up, you!"

Far into the night he could hear the sound of voices in the barroom, the frequent clattering stamp of spurred feet as one or two men came late up the stairs to bed.

VIII

IN THE morning before he had got nearly enough sleep, having been disturbed all through the night by the tramping and by his dreams, Norman was awakened again by the clatter of feet stamping through the hall and down the stairs. It was just beginning to be light.

From a suitcase he selected a dark flannel shirt, corduroy trousers, and a wide leather belt. Then he took his pitcher down and brought up water.

The cowboys were at breakfast. A few minutes later from his window he saw them tramping awkwardly on high-heeled boots down the street, making for the corral; and presently they rode from town, five of them, their horses at a jog-trot.

When he went down again George was nowhere about. Still sleeping, Norman supposed. The negro boy was behind the bar, standing respectfully by while the merchants took their eye-openers. They nodded to Norman, offering him the inevitable bottle.

Breakfast was pancakes, fried potatoes, thin steaks and coffee black as ink. Mrs. Welch waited table. The children were out of sight and for a time silent.

After breakfast Norman went to the Emporium, which sold every thing from pins to lumber, and was fitted with a pair of high-heeled boots, with a sewing of ornamental scroll-like work that gave the famous brand Star Y. Little Meyers knew how to build up business. Norman selected a pair of spurs and also bought a Stetson, leaving his straw hat.

When he returned to the hotel Simmons, the cowboy Harvey had left behind, was dealing solitaire. He said "Howdy" in a friendly way and eyed Norman's new spurs, new boots, new trousers, new shirt, new hat.

"Looks like somebody was gittin' all ready for a weddin'," said Simmons. "Harvey he allowed that you might want to a' go in a buckboard and take your traps along."

Norman said that he preferred to ride.

"Make you mighty sore. Maybe we can find a hoss though."

They went out together.

The blacksmith, called Blackie, whether because of his occupation or complexion, owned a few horses, being something of a trader. He allowed as how he guessed he had a horse and saddle Norman could use, though he had just spent an hour replacing a weak spoke in the buckboard wheels.

"Is that hoss o' yourn gentled?" asked Simmons with accents that seemed almost too solicitous.

"He's a good hoss," said Blackie, leaning against the long handle of a big hammer. "He's the only hoss I'd offer anybody as could ride. O' course, he's throwed some men in his day, but who wants a hoss that ain't? Not if you ca'calate to git anywhere."

"Can you ride?" asked Simmons, soberly, with somehow a warning in his tone.

"Yes," said Norman.

"Then that's all Biscuit asks of any man," said Blackie.

"Biscuit!" repeated Simmons, with elaborate concern.

Norman's heart missed a beat. He could ride. He was as good a cross-country rider as almost any man; but he was not a broncobuster, and he didn't want to have his back teeth jolted out of him at the beginning of a long ride. He said nothing. He knew better than to flinch at this time though they brought to him the worst outlaw on the range; besides there was very little in his nature that had a tendency toward flinching.

"How about goin' in the buckboard?" suggested Simmons.

"I prefer to ride," said Norman.

Simmons shook his head gravely:

"An' Harvey he tol' me to look after you good. You are plumb shore you want to *ride?*"

"Yes."

"There ain't nothin' more as I can do, Blackie. In a manner of speakin' Mr. Standish here is not only his own boss but mine too, least-wise while I'm ridin' for the Star Y. Bring on your hoss."

He gave the blacksmith an elaborate wink.

Blackie dropped his hammer, bunched the ashes of his forge to hold the fire, and led the way round back to a shed and corral where he kept up a few horses so as to have something to trade with nesters, most of whom had to wear their horses down with hard work.

"That's him. The sheep-headed buckskin," said the blacksmith, pausing, giving Norman a chance to change his mind.

"How about them other hosses?" suggested Simmons, with large notes of anxiety still in his voice.

"They ain't none of 'em cripples," said Blackie. "But they're work-hosses."

They looked it. Their sides were worn by traces. Their shoulders were without hair in places where collar sores had healed.

The humiliation of riding a work-horse was too much for Norman to consider. Biscuit himself was not anything to fill a rider with pride, but at least one did not have to look more than twice to see that the ewe-necked buckskin was a horse. He appeared meek enough, but Norman knew that many a range horse that was hard on a man in a saddle had an air of lazy harmlessness.

"O' course Mr. Standish, I want you to

know that this here hoss has killed two men," said the blacksmith soberly.

At that Norman did have a moment's weakness; but he rather suspected that they were putting it on pretty thick to try his nerves. Besides, he most certainly would not be seen on one of those other horses, and to go in the buckboard now would be to lose respect in his own eyes and in the eyes of every man to whom Simmons told the story.

For months, wherever he went, he would be forced to listen to men talking about that there sheep-headed buckskin o' Blackie's, the which had killed two men—by lettin' 'em die o' hunger before he got 'em to where grub was. That is, Norman knew that he would have to listen to such talk if Biscuit were harmless; and he had a little feeling of security in the belief that Simmons would not let him mount an outlaw.

"I ain't never seen him rode," said Simmons with exact honesty, "but I shore have heard tell of him."

"I'll try it," said Norman.

Simmons sighed audibly.

"Waal Blackie, there ain't nothin' more as we'uns can do but jest naturally throw a saddle on that bronc."

Simmons and Blackie went into the corral, telling Norman they would bring the horse out.

Simmons took a rope from a peg under the shed, and at the sight of it all the horses stirred into life and moved away. He tossed a noose over Biscuit's head and led him out. Blackie followed with saddle, blankets and bridle.

"It's after you get on him that he wakes up," said Blackie to Simmons.

"I know them kind, Blackie. They wasn't broke right. They've learned they can't keep from gittin' under a saddle, but they've learned too that not ever'body can stick. So they jest naturally sit pretty till they're climbed."

The stirrups were shortened, the saddle thrown on and cinched.

Norman, who knew all about riding as riding was known in the East, then inspected the cinches, loosening the rear one a little.

"Waal I'll be danged," said Simmons under his breath, seeing the tenderfoot change his own adjustment.

Norman prepared to mount, and the men also made those preparations that add uneasiness to the rider who isn't sure of his seat. Blackie held the horse's head; and Simmons, having looped the rope around the horse's neck in the fashion of a hackamore, then took hold of the end of the rope, dug his heel into the ground and braced himself as if to hold the bucking horse in a circle.

"Say," called Simmons, "jest a minute, there. Maybe I'd better top him off for you. Sort o' take out some o' his high life."

Norman almost yielded, but shook his head. He did not speak. He held the reins, fitted his foot into the wide stirrup, gripped the saddle horn and swung up, getting his free foot into the other stirrup and braced himself as Blackie let go of the horse's head and jumped back as if in great fear of being ridden down.

Nothing happened. Biscuit stood mildly expectant for a moment, then hearing no sound, feeling no pressure of rein or touch of spur, bent his head toward a wisp of dried grass and took two or three lazy steps.

At this the men began to roar with laughter, for there Norman sat, tense, pale, under an almost desperate strain, ready to do his best at riding a bad horse.

"Lookout!" yelled Blackie. "You'll fall off—he's goin' a-take another step!"

"E-whay-oo!" cried Simmons, waving his hat; while Biscuit swung his head in amiable inquiry at such foolishness.

Then something did happen. Norman was angered, his face suddenly red with hot blood. He sank the spurs far up into Biscuit's soft flanks, at the same time bending impulsively forward and drove his thumbs up along the horse's neck.

In an instant the amiable Biscuit changed. Memories of his ill-spent youth came to him, and, outraged by such treatment when he was as gentle as any horse could well be, he threw back his ears, threw down his head between his forelegs, and tore loose like a trout at the sting of a hook.

"Holy Judas! He thumbed him!" yelled Simmons, astonished; then braced himself at the end of the rope and went skating this way and that in an effort to hold the horse. The loop had slipped from Biscuit's nose; the noose remained around his tough neck.

"We shore played ——!" cried Blackie, running up to give Simmons a hand.

"We shore have!" Simmons agreed heartily. Then, loudly, at the top of his voice: "Ride 'im kid, ride 'im! Stay with him, cowboy!"

"He's got hair on his chest, that kid," said Blackie. "We might have knowed it!"

"We shore had, but Buck he's a mighty good friend of mine. I thought we'd take him down a peg." Then to Norman: "Stay with him, kid. Give him ——!"

Norman felt that his spine was being driven up into his head and that his head was being snapped at the neck like the cracker of a whip. He was jarred, jolted and swayed; he reeled dizzily, tugged at the reins, and in gripping the horse's body with his legs drove the long shanked spurs fiercely against Biscuit who, having started to pitch, took this as a sign that he was not satisfying the rider, and buckled under to do his best.

"Hang on, kid, hang on—go for the leather!" bawled Simmons, growing anxious.

Norman may not have heard him. Anyhow, from the time he could walk he had heard men who reached for their saddles spoken of with contempt; and in the riding he had done as a child he would tumble rather than pull leather.

Now he rode fiercely, yanking at the reins as he jolted between horn and cantle. Biscuit at his best wouldn't have been much more than a chair in an earthquake for a cowboy, but Norman was not a cowboy. The heavy stirrups flopped with every upward bound, and one of Norman's feet came out. Biscuit knew this as soon as Norman did. The horse humped himself, came down, dropping one shoulder about three feet lower than the other, and Norman was pitched headlong.

The men ran toward him.

Biscuit, without a glance around, took a deep breath, shook himself, and began nosing about for a spray or two of parched grass.

"Kid, air you all right?" begged Simmons, now really anxious, for Norman had been given into his care.

Norman sat up, dazed, hurt, sickened, with a headache.

"Get away," he said angrily, pushing off Simmons' hands.

Then he remained silent, and slowly got up, his eyes on first Slim, then on Blackie, both of whom were awkwardly trying to explain. But Norman was not listening.

"Take that rope off that horse," he ordered.

"We'll go in the buckboard. I sort o' hurt my leg an'——"

"Take that rope off that horse I tell you. I'm going to ride him! And you—both of you—if ever you play another trick like that on me, I'll take a club and break it over your heads—both of you!"

Simmons turned away, secretly chuckling. And Blackie, the strongest man in the country, humbly allowed that he wasn't ever again going to judge a man's ridin' gifts by the clothes he wore.

"It's gettin' so you can't tell nothin' by them there clothes no more!"

TO BE CONTINUED

THE MOST HATED MEN

by

John Webb

Author of "Fighting Men," "Strong and Weak," etc.

THE Haitian sky, calm, cloudless and turquoise blue, was no more expressionless than was the face of Shang Toy as he sat facing the dour little master of the *Hawk* in the latter's cabin. Below, the winches groaned and strained, and the small freighter trembled as the drafts of cargo were lifted and swung to the dock.

Through the open door came the jabbering and cursing of the sweating, half-naked stevedores; the squeaking whine of wire whips; the rattle and jerk of tackles as they straightened and strained; the crash of cargo landing upon the dock, or of an occasional case or bale that slipped from its sling and fell back into the vessel's hold; but in spite of all the disorder and uproar Shang Toy, rocking slowly in the captain's rocker, his pongee suit pressed and spotless and the sun helmet lying across his knees dazzling white with fresh pipe-clay, was as calm and unruffled as if he alone existed in all the world. He was always like that.

Captain McGuire, his face but a shade less sphinx-like than the aged Chinaman's, sat opposite in a swivel desk-chair. He was leaning back, with his hands, the most famous pair of fighting hands on all the North Atlantic, resting limply upon his knees. He was gazing calmly, almost unseeingly, at the immaculate yellow man in the rocking-chair. In reality, although there was not the slightest outward sign of it, the captain was studying Shang Toy. And Shang Toy was studying Captain Mac.

Shang Toy, the mysterious power behind the chaotic native government, the man who deftly steered, stopped, and started the political wheels of the republic while appearing to the unknowing to be merely a casual, uninterested onlooker, had asked a question, a trivial question of no apparent import, but it had started the captain to pondering. He had not yet answered.

"Are you going to allow your third mate to sign clear of the ship and stay in Port au Prince, as he wants you to?" Shang Toy had asked.

At length the little captain spoke.

"I give it up," he said, and he shook his head. "How did you know?"

Shang Toy did not answer. He merely blinked his almond eyes and rocked in even, measured cadence.

"How did you know?" the captain asked again. "We have been in port but an hour, and I don't believe Sondberg told any one but myself that he wanted to leave the ship. How did you know?"

The old Chinaman's net-work of facial wrinkles drew up and converged at the corners of his eyes. The corners of his lips puckered. It was his way of smiling.

"Shang knows," he said, and he stopped rocking. "I see nothing, I hear nothing—but, I know. Only to you, my friend, can I speak."

The ship-master nodded and smiled back, understandingly. In their cold, undemonstrative way, these two men, the two strangest and least understood characters in all the lands bordering on the Caribbean Sea, were fast friends.

"That is my business—to know things," Shang Toy continued. "They call me an octopus, a spider, a serpent—they are children. They do not understand. Never mind."

He dismissed the subject with a gesture and leaned forward.

"I came, my friend, to ask a favor. I hope you will grant it. Perhaps I can help you, you can help me, and between us we can help some one else. Sondberg has been offered a position as overseer of a pineapple-plantation, and he wants you to put him ashore. Sondberg is a reliable officer, but, nevertheless, you would let him go were it not for the fact that it is against the law to sail with less than three mates. If there was another licensed officer to take Sondberg's place you would be willing to do as he asks. That is so?" He waited.

Captain Mac nodded without speaking.

"Listen." Shang Toy leaned closer. "There is a young man ashore here who used to be a sailor—an officer. He has a chief mate's license. His name is Scott. He was employed here in a confidential capacity by one of two great rival concerns. I need not mention them. You know them, and you know the bitter rivalry, the hatred, that exists between them. It is almost war. The boy could not stand the tropics—he slipped. One night, in a café with a certain woman and a certain man, he drank too much—he let slip from his tongue information of much importance to his employers. The information went straight to the enemy. His company could not let him go because he had not told everything—he still knows things which the company is very desirous of keeping secret—they are afraid to discharge him. So they keep him on the pay-roll. They would like to see him out of the way, in some nice, quiet underground dungeon, perhaps, where he would be safe—until privation, loneliness, disease, closed his lips forever in death. Then too, although the officials of the company would not countenance murder, there is the chance that he may be *accidentally* shot by some subordinate. Or *accidentally* stabbed in a street brawl. Do you understand? The first I can prevent. He will not go to jail on a trumped-up charge. I have seen to that. But the other—" he spread his hands with a gesture of helplessness—"is up to you, Captain Mac."

Captain McGuire, understanding, nodded.

"Send him to me," he said, "and I'll take him before the consul and sign him on in place of Sondberg."

"There is another side to the case," Shang Toy went on in his precise English. "The boy is not suited to the tropics—few white men are. He has no responsibilities, but little work—nothing to occupy his mind. He is lounging about town taking things as they come. The sun, the climate, the drink—every day I see him becoming more lax. He is on the verge of no longer caring. He is a good boy, you understand, but careless. And the tropics——"

He spread his hands again.

When Shang Toy left the *Hawk* the captain walked with him to the gangway. Mr. Tenny, the chief mate, came to the gangway and looked after the yellow man with inquisitive eyes.

"Deep, deep," he said confidentially to the commander. "Thet Chink's a deep 'un. I don't know what he wants ye to do, cap'n—" he waited a moment, expectantly, then continued—"but whatever it is, don't ye do it."

"H'm." Captain Mac nodded agreement, but his eyes were laughing at the meddlesome old man's attempt to draw him out.

"He's deep, I tell ye—and mean. Nobuddy likes 'im."

"Worse than that," said the captain. "They hate him."

"Yep, yep, thet they do, cap'n." Mr. Tenny nodded vigorously.

"Because they fear him, Mr. Tenny. People always hate those they fear. It's a trick of human nature."

Old Tenny shook his head doubtfully at this. His washed-out blue eyes were brimming with unsatisfied curiosity.

"They hate me, too. Everybody does. Even you do, Mr. Tenny."

He smiled crookedly and halted the mate's declamation with a wave of his hand.

"I think between us—Shang Toy and me—we can lay claim to being the two most hated men south of Ambrose."

He turned away. Mr. Tenny stared at the captain's back and said nothing. His eyes were hateful and he was cursing silently with his lips.

Carrell Scott came down to the *Hawk* that afternoon. He was a young man of about twenty-six; well set-up, square-chinned, and with frank, gray eyes set well-apart. It was as Shang Toy had said—he was on the verge of becoming lax—careless. His chin was not as firm as was its wont, his lids were red-rimmed, and there were shadows beneath his eyes, as if from dissipation. His Palm Beach suit was soiled and wrinkled and he was in need of a shave. There was an air of sullenness about him, of irritableness, of rebellion. There was every sign that he was beginning to lose his mental and moral firmness, and this, in the tropics, is the beginning of a fatality.

Captain McGuire met him, questioned him curtly, inspected his license, and signed him on before the American consul. Scott had his luggage brought down to the ship, donned a faded blue uniform which showed signs of having been long packed away, and entered upon his duties with a zeal that showed he was glad of the chance to climb back to his former manhood. Sondberg packed and departed toward the interior.

"Keep your tongue between your teeth," was the latter's parting advice to Scott. "One-Two Mac's a bad actor—but he's square."

Three days later the *Hawk* sailed northward on the last leg of her three months' voyage.

WITHIN a month the little freighter, en route to Central American ports, stopped again at Port au Prince. Carrell Scott, in a clean white uniform, stood beside Captain Mac upon the bridge. His shoulders were back, there was a new set to his chin, and his bearing was one of confidence. His eyes were clear, but when he looked at the little ship-master at his side there was resentment, almost hatred, in them. On Scott's cheek was a scar, not yet fully healed.

Captain Mac had struck his new third mate. While in New York the master had reprimanded Scott for his negligence in not properly supervising the unloading of cargo. It was a small matter and would have passed over had not Scott, still a bit sullen, thought the captain interfering and too particular. He had given a surly reply, and then, giving way to his anger, he had followed with language not becoming his position as an officer. They had been alone upon the bridge. One-Two Mac had lashed out suddenly and sent Scott sprawling in a corner. The third officer had arisen, only to be sent down again. Still full of fight, and not being a quitter, he had got up again, only to find that the captain had disappeared. The fight, if it could be called a fight, was over.

It was the first time Scott had ever been struck by a superior. And it was the first time he had been beaten in a fist-fight. In fact, he wasn't convinced that he had been beaten. There was a dogged determination within him that would have sent him again and again to the attack, and only sheer exhaustion and a refusal of his muscles to obey his commands would have stopped him.

Scott knew, as did every one else, of the little captain's terrible reputation as a fighting-man, but he did not know that Captain Mac had gone to his room the night of the fight to save his third mate further punishment. In his secret heart the little man was a great admirer of gameness, and rather than needlessly inflict pain upon a man who was too game to quit he had almost run to his room.

Scott did not know this, and he grew resentful, and his resentment was gradually smoldering into hatred. He remembered the way the little commander had leered at him with his crooked smile. One-Two Mac had added another to the ranks of those who, not understanding him, hated him.

Scott got a side-light on Captain Mac that evening as he was leaning over the bridge rail smoking an after-dinner cigaret. Below him on the main deck two sailors were talking. One, an ordinary seaman, a young lad just starting upon his career as a sailor, had remarked with a boy's braggadocio—

"I'd like to see 'im hit me." He was speaking of Captain Mac.

The other, a grizzled old sea-dog with a voice like a fog-buoy, laughed.

"Ho, ho! Hit you! Don't worry, lad, he won't hit you. If he should, ye wanta stick out yer chest, 'cause One-Two Mac only hits men. Hit you! Ho, ho!"

"Well, he better not," retorted the boy. "If he did I'd turn him in to th' commissioner when we got back to New York."

The older man snorted angrily.

"Yer like the rest of th' kids thet er goin' to sea now-a-days. You'd aughta stayed to home wit' yer mama. Ye ain't got no sense anyways. When One-Two Mac hits a bloke he gives 'im the right to hit back. It's a fight, see? He don't chain a man to a stanchion an' then kick 'im, like these new-fangled skippers does. They stands up on th' bridge, looks down, an' says, 'Put 'im in irons, log 'im 'is pay, and when we gets to Cristobal send 'im to jail.' Thet's th' way the modern skippers does. The poor swab loses 'is pay, lays in irons fer a week, an' then rots in jail, and when 'e gets out 'e has to work 'is way north on some old tub wit'out pay. Thet ain't Cap'n Mac's way. He's down off th' bridge in a minute—bing, bang, biff, it's all over. No irons, no fine, no jail, no workin' fer nuthin'—yer black eye gets well in a week. Gimme Bucko Mac's way. I don't like 'im person'lly—thet —— crooked grin of his gets my goat, but 'e's square."

"Cap'n Mac only hits men."

Scott felt somewhat better after that, and the phrase kept running through his head as, contrary to Captain Mac's advice, he prepared to go ashore. He had not been much of a man when he first came to the *Hawk*, he felt sure of that, and surprizing to himself, he began to feel rather flattered by the means the captain had used to discipline him. Looking at it from his new angle, a blow, with the privilege to fight back, was undoubtedly better than having insubordination charges lodged against him with the licensing commission. The latter would have meant suspension, or possibly revocation of license. His resentment lessened and would have disappeared entirely had it not been for one thing. Captain Mac's smile. That crooked, twisted grin of derision. He could not forget that.

Later, at the Carib Club, Scott heard the same thoughts expressed in other words. Preston, a bluff old seaman, port captain for the steamship company that carried the bulk of Haiti's exports, became angered by something that another of the party had said about the master of the *Hawk*.

"Why don't you lay off One-Two Mac?" he snapped. "Sure, he's a bucko, but, what of it? If I was a sailor I'd rather be punched in the jaw by Cap'n Mac than logged a month's pay and sent to jail by some milksop that hasn't got spunk enough to come down off the bridge without a gun in his pocket and three mates at his back. What of it if he does let loose on a fo'csle hand once in a while? Sailors are supposed to be men. They used to *be* men. If a man hasn't got backbone enough to give and take he should stay at home—behind a ribbon-counter, where he belongs."

Scott winced at this. Had he, Carrell Scott, "backbone enough to give and take?" Captain Mac, by hitting him, by treating him like a man who could give and take, a real sailor, had shown that he took it for granted that he had. Scott pictured himself as he had been when he first signed on the *Hawk's* crew list. He had been a man disgraced. A betrayer of trust. He had been a waster, a slacker, only a step above a beachcomber.

Captain Mac had accepted him as a man, had given him a position of responsibility, had saved him from the rocks. Should he growl and whine at the man whose only mistake had been one of judgment, who had overestimated the man he had helped? No, by ——, he would prove the captain right! He would go to him. He would hold out his hand. He would say, "Here, Cap'n Mac. You thought I was a man. Well, —— it, I am." They would shake hands and be friends. Scott half-arose from his chair, with the intention of going straight back to the *Hawk* and seeking out the little captain.

The port captain was still speaking.

"He's the last of the buckos, the last of the men who fought their own battles and left the law for landsmen. And he's as good a fighting-man as ever I've seen."

For Preston, who had a deep-rooted contempt for all things modern, this was a concession.

"But everybody hates him—like they do old Shang. Don't know why, but those two are the most hated men in the tropics. Personally, I can't say that I am fond of either one of them myself. Shang's so smooth, and deep—you never know what he might be thinking about you. And One-Two Mac's so sarcastic, with his eyes and lips, without speaking. And when he smiles in that twisted way of his—well— But, blast it all, he's a man!"

Preston thumped the table with his fist, to drive home that fact, at least.

Scott sat down again. That smile! He could not get by that crooked smile. Should he go to Captain Mac, the little man would smile, would leer, would distort his face in that sarcastic grimace. Scott slumped deeper in his chair.

AT ELEVEN o'clock that night Captain Mac sat alone in his room. He was puffing at a little brown-paper cigaret, and at his side was an ash-tray full of discarded stubs. The room was in darkness, and through the open door the little man could see along the moonlit dock to the jetty. A member of the native constabulary, a carbine slung by a strap from his shoulder, lounged, half-asleep, against a pile of dye-wood. The silence of the night was broken only by the thrum of mosquitoes against the screens and the soft lap of water. Captain Mac, anxious about Scott, who against his advice and wishes had gone ashore, watched and waited.

Soon there was a form, a dark blotch against the gray of the dock, that came from the jetty and trotted along the stringpiece with short, swift strides. It was a man, or a youth, short, slender, and graceful of movement, who, evidently bent on avoiding discovery by the *gendarme*, stole stealthily, but swiftly, between the piles of cargo. The captain chuckled as the newcomer, like a ghost, slipped by almost within reach of the drowsy policeman. A moment later he was pattering up the *Hawk's* gangway, and the captain arose and went to the door of his room.

He was a boy, a yellow boy, and he came direct to the surprized captain and without a word handed him a folded paper which he took from somewhere within his blouse. It was a note, and Captain Mac stepped inside, switched on his light, and read.

> My Honorable Friend: S—— should not have gone ashore. There is a plot. Find him and bring him back with you. The police are against you. Follow Moy.

There was no signature.

"Me Moy," said the youth. "Your fiend Calib Club."

He started for the door.

Together they left the ship, avoided the policeman, now sound asleep, passed along the dock to the jetty and on into the town. The Carib Club was four blocks from the dock. They went swiftly along a dark, forbidding street lined on both sides with yawning stone doorways. Soon there loomed above their heads a huge spire-topped mass, the cathedral, and they increased their speed. The club was just around the corner.

"*Halte!*" A khaki-clad negro policeman sprang from an open doorway and barred their way with his out-flung carbine.

Moy did not pause. He ducked beneath the rifle and continued the few steps to the corner. There he hesitated but a fraction of a second, then sprang forward. His voice, tense and high, came around the corner to the waiting captain.

"Quick, cap'n, quick! Plenty fight!"

Captain Mac flung the *gendarme* aside with a sweep of his arm and followed the little Chinaman.

On the sidewalk three men were struggling. One, a white man, was defending himself against two giant blacks, one of whom was brandishing a knife. To one side stood a white man, and he held a revolver in his hand as if in readiness to shoot should it be necessary.

Moy glided forward and climbed like a cat to the back of the man with the knife. With one arm he encircled the man's throat from behind, and with the other hand he grasped the wrist of the hand holding the knife. Scott, it was he, turned his attention to the other black.

Captain Mac threw himself upon the man holding the revolver. The catapulting body threw the man momentarily off his balance, and before he could recover, his revolver hand had been forced over his head and a fist had smacked solidly to his jaw. They fell together to the sidewalk, twisted and rolled over the two-foot curb to the cobble-stoned street. One-Two Mac, one hand at the man's throat and the other clutching at the revolver, was on top.

The *gendarme*, angry at the captain's refusal to halt, and undoubtedly friendly to Scott's opponents, came around the corner at a run, his carbine held ready for a smashing blow with the butt. He made directly for the two men struggling in the road.

There was a flash and the sound of a shot, and the *gendarme* halted suddenly. His face, in the moonlight, was stupid with surprize. His surprized expression changed to one of pain, and his white teeth glistened as he drew back his lips. Then he staggered backward, slowly, step by step, until his heels came against the worn steps of the cathedral. His rifle fell from his hands and clattered to the pavement. The man fell on top of it and lay still.

Captain Mac wrenched himself clear and sprang erect. He had the still smoking revolver in his hand. The other scrambled to his feet and ran. The two negroes bolted and disappeared around the corner. Only Captain Mac, Scott, Moy, and the dead man lying face up at the foot of the cathedral steps, remained.

Down the street came three mounted *gendarmes*, their horses at a gallop. Moy grasped the captain by his coat, and in spite of his protests pulled him into a doorway. The revolver was dropped and left lying at the curb. Scott darted for the doorway, hesitated, turned and ran into the street. The horsemen came down upon him and he halted with his hands in the air. Three carbines were leveled at his head.

One of the three, a sergeant by the chevrons on his sleeve, dismounted and strode to the dead man lying on the sidewalk. He leaned down and the two watching from the doorway could hear his hoarse exclamation of surprize. He looked around, saw the revolver and picked it up. He raised his hand to his mouth and the still night-air was rent by the screech of a whistle.

"Did you do this?" The sergeant, speaking in English, was addressing Scott.

There was no answer.

"You shot this man?" It was half-question, half-accusation.

Scott still did not answer.

"Tell me! Did you?"

From the doorway the two, the man and the boy, could see Scott straighten and throw back his shoulders. He looked at the revolver in the sergeant's hand, then at the body on the sidewalk. He looked toward the passage in which they were hiding and when he spoke his answer came clear to them.

"Yes."

Captain Mac started forward in surprize, but Moy clung to his arm.

"No! Stay here! Me savvy."

The yellow boy pulled him back into the shadow.

Then, like a flash of light, it came to Captain Mac too. Scott was trying to protect him, or at least give him a chance to get away. The third mate thought that Captain Mac had fired the shot that had killed the *gendarme*. The fool! Captain Mac started forward again, but Moy clung to him with all his strength.

"No, no! One in jail plenty. You free, help 'um, in jail, no can help 'um. Shang Toy fix."

Excited and angry as he was the captain could see the wisdom of the boy's words, and he ceased trying to free himself. They stood quietly waiting.

Two of the *gendarmes*, Scott walking between their horses, moved off down the street. The other one stood guard over the dead man.

"Come."

Plucking Captain Mac by the sleeve Moy beckoned him to follow. The boy leading, they went straight back into the dark passage, and at length came out into a courtyard. At the other side of the court was a passage which evidently led to the next street. As they crossed the yard, all gray and silver in the moonlight, a distant bell was chiming midnight.

"You come Shang Toy tomollow," whispered Moy, and he slipped away in the darkness of the passage.

SHANG TOY, on the streets of Port au Prince, was a mongrel, an incongruity, an occidentalized Oriental, a Chinaman with the speech and manners of west of Suez; but Shang Toy in the room behind his curio store—the store which did five hundred dollars' worth of business yearly and was Shang's excuse for living in Port au Prince—was an Oriental *par excellence*, a Chinaman. There during the heat of the afternoons he would sit cross-legged upon a mat, at his hand a glass of warm rice whisky, cut with Bourbon and flavored with aniseed and powdered ginger.

Shang, as he sat thus, exuded all the qualities of the Orient; calmness, gentleness, wisdom, and that indefinable something which denotes poise. And about the room there was an atmosphere of chandoo and aloe-wood; of bronze, green with age; of carved statues brought out of the India of Confucius; of fine embroideries and silken brocades, faded and musty with the scent of dead centuries, and heavy with the warm fragrance of China.

On the day following the killing of the policeman and the arrest of Scott, Shang Toy sat upon his mat in the room behind his little shop. At his hand was a glass of Chinese rice whisky. Behind him stood Moy.

There were three doors to the room, one leading to a rear room, one to the shop, where a young Filipino lounged behind a counter, and the other, in the side of the house, opening upon the Champs de Mars. All three doors were closed and locked. The room was lighted only by the rays that filtered through two small square windows high in the wall.

There was a sharp knock at the door opening into the street.

"Open," said Shang Toy, speaking in Chinese. "It is my honorable friend."

Moy opened the door and ushered in Captain Mac. There were but four men in all Haiti who had seen the inside of that room. Captain Mac was one of the privileged.

Shang Toy arose, and in accordance with Chinese courtesy, bowed the little shipmaster to a mat at the east side of the room, himself taking the one at the west.

"Be seated, my friend," said Shang Toy. "We can not act until tonight. Tell me about it."

"You know that Scott has been arrested for shooting the *gendarme*?"

Shang Toy nodded.

"You know that he lied when he said that he did it?"

Shang Toy nodded again. Moy came with a tray and set a glass of liquor on a stand at the little captain's elbow.

"The white man I was wrestling with fired the shot," said Captain Mac. "He fired at Scott, but the bullet struck the curb, ricocheted and hit the *gendarme*. It was not until after the shot was fired that I was able to wrench the revolver from his hand. Scott thinks he is shielding me."

"He is a young fool," said Shang Toy. "Had he told the truth I would have had him freed by noon. I have been to the commissioner. He intends holding Scott, of course. 'A *gendarme* is dead,' he says. 'We have under arrest the man who says he shot him. What more do we want?' He is right, and even though he knew the truth, there is pressure enough from outside, coupled with the boy's confession, to keep Scott in jail. The commissioner is laughing at me; he thinks that for once he is going to put it over on old Shang—make me lose face.

"Scott's former employers are behind this, of course, indirectly. It is a question of oil—oil, more precious than gold. Every one knows there is oil in Haiti, but its exact whereabouts has been a mystery. This company has information which means millions to them—if Scott can be silenced. They do not trust him after his breach of faith. In jail his life is in grave danger—a pinch of poison in his food— The official I must reach to protect him is in Cuba; he will not return for ten days. Then it will be too late. There is still another way."

Shang Toy leaned forward and gazed into Captain Mac's worried eyes.

"You must get the man that shot the *gendarme* and bring him here. I will get a confession from him—no matter how."

He puckered the wrinkles of his eyes and lips in a smile.

"It will be easy. The man is in no danger of being convicted. It was an accidental shot, he will say, and his company, with its millions, will stand behind him. But I will demand that our young friend be released—on bail, at least. The whole affair will be squashed—it will become merely a common street brawl in which a policeman was accidentally shot. But we must have the man who fired the shot. And we must have him before tomorrow morning."

"Do you know him?" asked Captain Mac eagerly.

"Yes."

Shang Toy leaned forward and whispered a name and an address.

"He is a big man, but cowardly. On his left cheek there is a scar. He is a good shot with rifle or revolver, and he will not hesitate to shoot. Moy."

He motioned to Moy, who went to the rear room and returned with a big black automatic pistol in a shoulder holster.

"Put that on beneath your coat," said Shang Toy. "Go to the man's house tonight after dark. He will be in. Bring him directly here."

From within the wide sleeves of his blouse the old Chinaman slipped a small fan, and he slid it across his polished finger-nails with a rattling noise.

"He will then confess," he said, and he closed his eyes.

IT WAS a low, square bungalow, situated on the northern edge of the town and on the road that went to Cape Haitien. It set back among the trees and there was a narrow, crooked path that led from the dusty road to the front door of the house.

Across the road from the house a sapodilla-tree, heavy with fruit, bent and swayed in the fresh trade wind. In the shadow of the tree stood Captain Mac. It was night, dark and gloomy on the lonely road, and the black clouds that obscured the moon promised rain. Farther along the road there was a small, disreputable *taverne*, and before its door two constabulary ponies waited for their riders.

Captain Mac crossed the road and walked boldly up the path leading to the bungalow. He mounted the steps to the porch and tried the door. It was locked, and he stood with his hand on the knob, undecided. There was a sudden clatter of horse's hoofs from the rear, and Captain Mac ran to the end of the porch and looked around the corner of the house. In the rear of the house was a stretch of open ground, and across this a horse was tearing at break-neck speed. Upon its back was a big man who bent low in the saddle. The man had escaped! Captain Mac remembered Shang Toy's words. "We must have him before tomorrow morning," and he looked after the horse and rider, both now blotted out by the night.

"Hai, hai."

The call came from the trees that lined the path, and Captain Mac whirled to face the sound. A slender form slipped from between the trees and came toward him.

"Come quick, capt'n. We catch 'um yet."

It was Moy, and he padded back toward the road, leaving the captain to follow.

In the road Moy turned and ran toward the *taverne*, and Captain Mac, at his heels, saw his intention. Together they raced to the waiting horses and threw themselves to their backs. A *gendarme* came to the door and stood with his mouth open in surprize as they tore away. A moment later a bullet kicked up the dirt ahead and there was the sound of a shot, then they plunged into the friendly darkness.

Straight along the road Moy led the way for at least a mile, then he swung sharply to the right, and leaving the road they raced along beneath the drooping leaves of banana-trees. They came to another smaller road and Moy turned into it. If Moy's judgment was correct the fugitive was fleeing toward the Cul-de-Sac marshes.

It began to rain and the road-bed became a morass. Still on they went, mile after mile, the little ponies plugging stubbornly on through the mire.

At the end of an hour Moy pulled his horse to a walk and Captain Mac followed suit. The road had narrowed and was now only a narrow path that ran crookedly through the foul swampland.

"Him fool," said Moy. "Rain make plenty mud. Road all swamp soon. No can go much further."

He had hardly ceased speaking when the darkness ahead was pierced by a streak of flame, and there was a sound as of the angry droning of a passing bee. Then came the report of the shot. They dropped from their horses and landed ankle-deep in the mud. Captain Mac fired, but he purposely aimed high. He would do Scott no good by shooting the slayer of the policeman. Moy slipped into the brush at the side of the road and disappeared.

Captain Mac left the horses and stole forward, crouching low so that his body could not be seen against the sky. There was a sound as of some one passing in the brush and he dropped to the ground and lay flat, listening.

There was a shot from ahead, then another, then a series of flashes that stabbed back and forth in the darkness. Moy had evidently circled and was now on the opposite side of the fugitive.

There was the *squash, squash* of feet plunging along through the mire, and soon a form stood out faintly against the dark sky. The form was too big to be Moy and Captain Mac crouched in the brush and waited.

The man was almost atop the waiting captain when his pistol clicked on an empty chamber. He stopped with a curse, and he was fumbling at his belt for cartridges when the captain sprang to his feet.

"Drop it!"

Captain Mac, his pistol held awkwardly in his hand, advanced toward the big man standing in the road.

"Drop your gun, I tell you!" The captain came closer.

The big man looked at the little one, and his eyes took in the awkward way in which the captain was holding the pistol. He decided to take a chance.

With a motion as if to throw his own weapon to one side he swung suddenly and knocked the pistol from the captain's hand. It fell and was lost in the mud. The big man laughed shortly.

"So you're the bird that's been doing all the shootin'," he said. "No wonder you couldn't hit me—when you can't even hold on to your own gun. By the noise you was makin' I thought you was a gang."

He looked down at the little ship-master and laughed. It was evident that he thought Captain Mac alone.

The big man was fully a head taller than Captain Mac, and in the darkness he could not see the little man's face; had he been able to do so he would have ceased his taunting. The captain was smiling; a smile that lifted one side of his mouth and lowered the other; a crooked, twisted, sarcastic grin; a grin of fiendish anticipation. They were both unarmed, and One-Two Mac, the fighting ship-master who had fought his way to fame as the toughest of buckos, could ask no more.

"I took your gun away from you, now I think I'll throw you in the ditch and go home."

The man reached out and caught Captain Mac by the collar of his coat.

It was as if he had put his hand on a sleeping wildcat. A hand flashed up and sharp knuckles cut a three-inch gash in his cheek, another blow mashed his lips between his teeth and a third dug into his throat beneath his chin. It was the last blow that sent him, gasping and coughing, to the ground. He arose and began fighting, frantically and with the desperation of a coward who knows the uselessness of flight. He lunged forward and swung heavy blows, blows that described semi-circles in the air and landed upon nothing. The little man was on top of him, beside him, and behind him, and the sharp, stabbing blows seemed to come from all directions at once. And each blow, like the thrust of a sword, left its mark. Soon the big man, blinded by blood, and exhausted both by his own futile efforts and the battering of those never-tiring arms, sank to his knees and covered his head with his arms.

"Stop, stop," he cried. "Let up, —— it, let up!"

Captain Mac ceased hitting and leaned down.

"Will you write out a confession that you killed the *gendarme?*" he asked.

"I'll write out nine of 'em," gasped the man. "Only let up on that sockin'."

Moy came up with the horses. He was smiling blandly and there was something in his eyes that suggested admiration.

AT DAWN six men stood in Shang Toy's shop; Captain Mac, Shang Toy, Moy, two *gendarmes*, and the big man with the scar. The last named, confident that his detention would be merely a short formality, took his capture lightly, and he was loudly reciting the adventures of the night to the grinning *gendarmes*.

"And I took his gun away from him," he was saying. "He didn't even know how to hold it. I wish I had let him keep it—he might have shot himself. He was more dangerous without it than he was with it. I took him by the neck and was going to throw him into the swamp. Gosh! It was like kickin' a jungle-cat. He hit me forty-seven times and I didn't even see 'im move."

He felt tenderly of his bandaged face.

"Gosh! Why didn't they send the army instead?"

"Take him away." Shang Toy motioned to the two policemen. "Tell my most honorable friend, the commissioner, that *I also* have a copy of the confession."

When they had gone Shang Toy bowed Captain Mac into the inner sanctum. They sat upon the mats and Moy came with his tray and glasses of liquor. Captain Mac rolled a cigaret.

Shang Toy sat upon his mat with all the dignity of a mandarin. Behind him, as he sat thus, one could visualize generation after generation of calm Chinamen, dignified, honorable gentlemen all, and reaching thirty centuries into the dim past. Behind him were three thousand years of unbroken racial history; of pride; of achievements; and Shang Toy sat with the knowledge that this was so. In his face, with its network of wrinkles, and in his eyes, dark and unfathomable as the sea at night, was the wisdom of the ages.

"My friend," said Shang Toy, "do you know what they are saying? They are saying, 'Old Shang's messing in politics again.' And 'Shang's got something up his sleeve.' Because I try to save a boy from ruin or death. When I cross the street they say, 'Look out for Shang, he's deep.' If I buy a box of pipe-clay for my helmet, they say, 'Look out for Shang.' If I go down to the *Hawk* to see my old friend, the captain, they say, 'Look out for Shang.'"

The aged Chinaman smiled his queer smile.

"They read something deep and mysterious in every move I make."

Captain Mac nodded and puffed away at his little brown cigaret.

Shang Toy continued:

"We are a pair of fools, perhaps, but, after all, wasn't it worth while? In saying that he fired the shot that killed the *gendarme*, Scott did a childish thing, of course—but, really, Captain Mac, wasn't it also a very manly thing? To sit here on our mats like this, and to know that we helped a man to find himself—that is our compensation. 'Virtue is its own reward.' "

Shang Toy's voice, soft and full, like the rubbing of an ancient temple gong, ceased.

Shang Toy dropped his lids and rocked slowly back and forth. The wrinkles of his face bunched and knotted about his eyes. In his Mongol way he was laughing; perhaps at the world; the selfish, milling horde which crushed beneath its feet that which it was looking for, the reward of virtue—happiness.

Captain Mac smiled crookedly and puffed at his cigaret.

The "two most hated men" were happy.

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

In the Eyes of Men

THE sea is blood and murder from surface to sand or rock at its bottom. We idealize the most utterly merciless and most intolerably brutal thing upon the globe—the sea. Why? Partly ignorance, partly blindness—but more than either the innate desire within us to make a hideous thing beautiful; forgetting horror in delight, whenever we may.

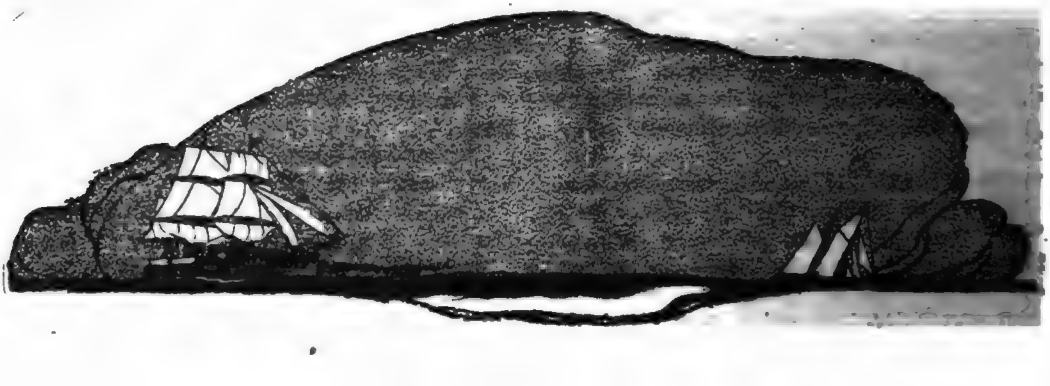
You never sat above the sweating backs of the wheelers on a mule-team, dragging a combined across a blazing July plain, did you? I have—I've seen the calling mirages outstretched along the lifted horizons and the far-off solitary desert tree that seemed to stand two feet or more above the earth's level. I've smelt the acrid scents of desert weeds, and driven my mules home after sunset was cold in the west with glory in my soul. There's beauty everywhere—not in the sea alone.

You've never gone into a cow-barn at two of a frosted morning, and seen the soft-eyed cattle turn their heads and heard them low to you, have you? Then fed them and sat down to draw their milk away? Three hours or four all alone in night's great mysteries, with nature's marvel? Just as much beauty in a common cow-barn, lad, as on the high-racked spar of a main-skysail-yarder. There's beauty everywhere. It's up to you to find it. Writings of other men don't give it to one—for it must waken brightest in a man's own soul.

You never worked deep down below the surface in a foul basement pushing a truck all day, did you? Surrounded by men whose bodies trembled with their weariness? Men whose women and whose children were hungering at home for a square meal? Men who fought despair, alone, and friendless in a world of hard, cold fellow men?

There's beauty and there's wonder there.

The utmost beauty lies not in the rhythm of a line of words with music's sounds in them—it lies within the eyes of mortal men about you. Find it if you may.



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HILLBILLIES

by

Ramsey Benson

Author of "Orders," "Slug 33," etc.

DOWN at the end of the valley, five or six miles away but in plain sight from the front door of the cabin, a derrick and drill were sinking a wildcat well—for oil. Hammer, hammer, hammer—the Spadeses could hear the ponderous bit going day and night.

Hillbillies—old Black Peter Spades, a widower these many years, and Red Peter, his unwed son. Not for a generation, in their cabin up yonder among the rocks, had there been a woman to keep the hearth swept and garnished. Black Peter cooked and did whatever sweeping and garnishing was done while Red Peter tilled the little patches of stunted corn or trapped or fished or, at rare intervals when his services were in demand, worked out for wages. They were poor; but poverty was the common lot in their country, and they were as well content as most men.

In the derrick down at the end of the valley hillbillies as a species were only mildly interested. No doubt they had heard about oil and its marvels, but they were by no means set on fire. They were told that if the drill struck a paying pool their country would be transformed, but they had their doubts. Nothing could transform their country, as they knew it, unless an earthquake.

Even when the machinery suddenly ceased its clatter and the word went forth that the bit was resting in black sand there was no stir among the hillbillies. Black sand was a kind of sand they had never seen. They were unaware of its significance. In their hearts they didn't believe there was any such thing.

The news caused stir enough elsewhere, however, so that men of strange aspect, in starched collars and the general garb of opulence, came in great numbers. The valley fairly swarmed with them in fact, and more and more, as the near-by leases were snatched up, they found their way back into the hills.

Geologists, the Spadeses heard certain of the men called; and these geologists, whatever their purpose might be, made it in their way to prowl in a very especial manner of mystery about the little farm where Red Peter and Black Peter lived and had their primitive being. Just within the farthest confines of the tract there was a trickling spring that had never been of any use—neither man nor beast could drink out of it by reason of a viscid brown scum that mantled its waters. But the scum was precisely what interested the geologists most. They took specimens of it away with them in bottles, and it wasn't long after that till parties were climbing up the path to the cabin to talk business.

They wanted to lease the land. That was the usual way—a lease at so much an acre a year for the right to drill, with a royalty of so many cents a barrel if they drilled and brought in a producing well, to be paid to the owners in fee. But the Spadeses had made up their minds to have nothing to do with any leases, and they were not to be talked out of their determination, though the parties who climbed up the path could talk very well indeed.

"Take it or leave it!" Red Peter made answer to their overtures steadfastly.

"Take it or leave it!" Black Peter repeated after him. Meaning that whoever acquired title had to buy outright.

The first parties went away; but they, or others, came back shortly with offers for the freehold. They began with ten dollars an acre; but the Spadeses weren't tempted by so modest a price.

"The timber alone's worth that much," Red Peter pointed out.

"Jest the timber alone—sayin' nothing about the land," argued Black Peter.

They hadn't to wait long for a better bid. More geologists came nosing about the bad spring; that first offer of four hundred dollars for the forty acres was doubled before nightfall, and by another sundown the Spadeses were refusing fifteen hundred dollars.

But of course they ran a risk, and they were not too simple to sense it. If the boom was only a bubble, as well it might turn out to be, they were in danger of holding out too long. They slept the night; and early next day, when parties offered three thousand or seventy-five dollars an acre, they saw fit to call it a trade.

Right away, however, there was a hitch. Parties were used to the commercial fashion of making payment and wrote a check accordingly. They wrote a check and handed it to Red Peter, and he shook his head and handed it back—the scrap of paper didn't look like anything but a scrap of paper to him.

"Real money—we'll sign up when youuns pay us the real money," he stipulated gruffly.

"Real money!" mumbled Black Peter.

The parties had a few hundreds in currency with them, and they wanted to pay it over and take a receipt to bind the deal while they went to get the rest of the money; but the Spadeses had no fancy whatever for being so bound.

"Somebody mout come along and offer us more," Red Peter objected craftily.

"I wouldn't wonder and somebody didn't come along and offer us more," Black Peter chuckled with a knowing air.

So the parties had to leave their bargain up in the air until they could hustle to the nearest bank and procure the needful cash; and it was during their absence that John Avery got into the game.

He came with a bid for the land. It wasn't more, though. In point of fact it was five hundred dollars less—only two thousand five hundred dollars. But he knew hillbillies better, and he had been wise enough to bring the price in a kind of money than which no kind could be more real.

Gold, in a word. He had two thousand five hundred dollars worth of yellowboys in a stout shot-bag; and when he poured out the glittering coins Red Peter's eyes glittered responsively. So likewise did Black Peter's. The fact that the price was to be paid down in gold and the gold right there under their hands—it seemed so to enhance the offer in their estimation that the five hundred dollars they were asked to sacrifice was in a manner offset and outweighed. It was as if the sight of the yellowboys had put a spell upon them, and they didn't shake it off till they had signed what was in effect a contract and the title to the land had passed to John Avery.

He held it just a little over twenty minutes by the clock. In twenty minutes or less the parties who had negotiated the sale at three thousand dollars and gone to get the cash came back up the declivity in their fast car, and Avery sold the forty to them for five thousand dollars.

That was when the Spadeses woke up. Here was quick action even for a dicker in oil; but they were not too dazed by it to perceive right away where it left them. They had sold out for two thousand five hundred dollars and let another two thousand five hundred dollars slip through their fingers; and though they had their own simplicity mostly to blame they were only the angrier with John Avery for having so taken advantage of them.

They were mad enough to fight. Red Peter held his peace and did nothing but glare balefully; but Black Peter boiled right over.

"Swindler!" he screamed and shook his fist under Avery's nose. "We didn't sign no deed, and we won't sign!"

They signed, however. They were under contract to do so, and Red Peter at least had no intentions of backing out.

"We'll do what we agree!" he growled sullenly.

They signed the deed, Red Peter in silence, Black Peter with a final burst of wrath.

"It'll do ye no good—you'll see!" he warned John Avery. "The wicked shall prosper for a season—that's what the Good Book says, and what it says is so. You'll see!"

The Spadeses took their bag of gold, and, when the men were gone and there was nobody to see them, buried it under a loose plank in the kitchen floor. The ground was no longer theirs; but the new owners didn't care about the part of the forty where the cabin stood, and they assured Red Peter and Black Peter that they were welcome to stay as long as they liked.

ALL sorts and conditions of men came and went—some good and some bad, some who meant to pay honestly for what they got and some who were no better than thieves. Thievery was a downright novelty in those parts, too, and it made more stir among the hillbillies than the clanking drill or the talk of black sand.

Red Peter heard, down at the crossroads where he went to trade, that a ham had been stolen from a smoke-house—a prodigy without precedent. The merchant, with a thrifty eye to the passing breeze that might be made to fill his sails, laid in a stock of padlocks and spread the report of the stolen ham. Red Peter heard it and brought a padlock home with him.

Black Peter made a wry face at the sight of it.

"I don't admire to live in a kentry where padlocks has to be clapped on smokehouses to keep hams from bein' stole," he grumbled.

Red Peter evidently relished the business as little, but he put the padlock in place at once—the sooner the better if there were thieves about. He drove the staples deep into the hard, seasoned logs of the ancient building; he fitted the hasp rudely but securely to the heavy door: and when he had snapped the padlock into its place he hid the key in a crevice just under the eaves of the cabin, Black Peter watching him sourly the while.

That night, in his capacity of cook and housekeeper, Black Peter was put to the strange necessity of unlocking the smokehouse in order to get the materials for supper, and he was frankly irked. The crevice where the key had been hidden was almost out of his reach; and when he had fetched the key down it stuck in the tumblers and baffled him annoyingly. He wasn't used to keys, and old dogs don't pick up new tricks in a minute.

Black Peter flared out angrily, talking to himself. He expressed anew his discontent with a country where such things had to be. But withal he wasn't seriously hindered in his work—he had supper ready as usual when Red Peter slouched in and flung his hat on the floor.

Supper was ready as usual, and as usual they ate it—without a word being spoken. Red Peter devoured his hunks of cornbread soaked in fat with frequent slices of meat interspersed, and when he was done he lighted his pipe, dragged the clumsy splint chair back away from the table and sat down, tilted against the wall, his knees drawn up and the heels of his shoes hooked over the rung. In that posture he smoked slowly and thoughtfully, saying nothing.

The back door of the cabin stood open behind him. The front door, directly across the room, was shut. They seldom used it.

Black Peter washed the dishes, muttering to himself now and then but otherwise in silence. The back door was behind him too.

Behind them both; and neither of the Spadeses was looking that way when a slinking figure stole in, noiseless as a shadow. Black Peter was a little hard of hearing and heedless to boot; and Red Peter was so lost in his reflections that the figure not only stole in through the door but crept up near his chair unseen. The first intimation Red Peter had of anything untoward was the muzzle of a gun poked right up in his face.

If the slinking figure's purpose had been in any degree doubtful there could be no doubt after that. He was a thief bent on plunder, and by every token he wasn't after anything so trifling as hams. A bandit, in short, to give him the name his manner and methods deserved.

"Stick 'em up!" he barked harshly and without a quaver, as if that sort of enterprise were not new to him.

Red Peter understood. Though unschooled in the slang of the day he understood perfectly what was wanted of him.

Promptly and without parley he put his hands up over his head.

Black Peter was a weak old man, and the bandit had a right to deem him a point of secondary importance in the attack, to be safely left and attended to presently. A moment since he had been drying a big yellow bowl with a tattered dishcloth; but when the bandit, having got the drop on Red Peter, glanced back over his shoulder there were only the bowl and the dishcloth to be seen—Black Peter had vanished.

A big round oath made it sufficiently clear that the bandit hadn't counted upon just such a turn.

"The old man's gone for help; but —— little good it'll do you!" he snarled.

Nevertheless he lost no time. Even as he spoke he was at work swiftly. He fished a strong cord out of his pocket and with unholy skill, somehow managing the knots with his teeth and the fingers of his right hand while he held the gun steady in his left, he got Red Peter trussed up in such wise that his arms were tied together behind him with the loose end of the cord run up between his shoulders, looped forward about his throat and thence drawn back down to his pinioned wrists. That done—and he did it almost sooner than the telling—the bandit thrust a short stick through the thong and with a few quick turns twisted Red Peter's arms upward and his neck backward until the bones cracked in their sockets and his breath came in labored gasps.

A more effective means of torture could hardly be devised. Red Peter howled in agony—howled and choked.

"Where you got that gold hid?" demanded the bandit savagely.

* * *

BLACK PETER hadn't gone for help. He slid out of the kitchen at the first glimpse of the bandit's gun, but not to raise an alarm. The nearest neighbors were too far away—by no means at his command could he reach them and rouse them and get back soon enough to prevent the mischief that was afoot. The bandit was right—it wouldn't do Black Peter any good to go for help.

He was mighty spry, however. He too could work swiftly in a pinch, though ordinarily so feeble. He heard Red Peter's howl of agony, and it acted upon him like a galvanic shock—as might the distressful wail of the little child Red Peter once had been, calling to the father's protective instinct.

"Hold out, sonny—hold out jest a minute!" the old hillbilly whispered under his breath.

Whatever was done he had it to do alone and right now; and as he rose to the emergency it seemed as if the years of his age fell away from him.

The night was densely dark, but that was as he would have it. He knew exactly what he was about; he didn't need to be lighted on his familiar way, and he did need, for the purpose he had in mind, to work under cover. Although he couldn't see his hand before him he flitted swiftly and without groping, first to the chink in the logs under the eaves, where he got the key, and thence to the smoke-house, where he unlocked the door.

He slipped the padlock out of the hasp and put it in his pocket. It had its part in his strategy.

The darkness was even more dense inside the smoke-house; but he went straight to the old bear-trap hanging in the far corner and brought it out, together with the clamps used in setting it. Making never a sound, he knelt on the ground and proceeded, wholly by the sense of touch, to work the springs down and spread open the ponderous toothed jaws.

That was never anything but a difficult and dangerous undertaking, its difficulties and dangers multiplied now. The powerful springs being crowded down, the force latent in them invested the inert iron as it were with a character of malignancy, like that of a fearsome wild beast crouched ready to leap up and set its cruel fangs into an arm or leg or whatever else might be so unlucky as to get in the way.

A delicately balanced trigger held the jaws of the trap apart—so delicately balanced that the touch of a sleeve brushing against the pan would be enough to release them. A wrong motion in the dark, and it might be Black Peter's own arm or leg caught in the mangling, jagged fangs.

But he made no wrong motions; and quite as soon as if it had been broad daylight he had the springs forced down and the trigger balanced. Thereupon he picked the trap up very gingerly, since so slight a jar might serve to throw it, and carried it over and laid it down by the back door of the cabin.

Men who pursue wild game, and especially men who live by such pursuit, develop special instincts. A hunter learns to shoot to kill without paying any attention to the sights of his gun, and in a similar manner a trapper knows, though he can't tell you how he knows, just about where the creature he is after will set its foot down. Nor does it much matter whether the creature walks on four feet or two.

Black Peter had been a famous trapper in his day and he hadn't lost the special instinct. A man walked on two feet; but so did a bear at times; and, whether or no, Black Peter's instinct was equal to the chance that his game might step over the trap and in that way escape.

A flat rock broke the drop from the threshold of the back door to the ground. A man coming out might clear the rock at a bound; but he was more likely, especially if he happened to be a stranger in the dark, to feel his way to some extent, not knowing where a bound might land him. He was likely to step down on the rock, and if he did so the next stride would bring him into the path the Spadeses, going and coming these many years, had worn in the flinty soil.

So much for the probabilities, as they might be reasoned out. Black Peter didn't consider them, for reasoning was no part of the trapper's trade as he knew it. He had his purpose definitely in mind, but for the rest he went by instinct. He laid his trap down where instinct told him to lay it.

Red Peter's cries of agony meanwhile were hardly for a moment still, and they served Black Peter's purpose in two ways. When he lifted the rusty old log-chain out of the crotch of the willow by the door the links clanked a little in spite of him, and the cries from the kitchen covered the sound. But more than that they filled the old man with the tremendous wrath which caused the years to fall away and gave him back the strength of his youth wherewith to do what needed to be done.

He lifted the log-chain down out of the tree and dragged it over to the doorstep. That was where the padlock played its part in the strategy. Black Peter thrust it through a link of the log-chain and a link of the chain that went with the trap and locked the two securely together.

"Eighty pound!" he gloated grimly. "Not countin' what the trap weighs!"

THE cabin had a little window set in the logs at either end. Black Peter crept around to the window at the kitchen end and peered in very furtively. Red Peter had fallen forward and lay prostrate but with his head so drawn back by the cord around his throat that his face showed hideously mottled and distorted. His thick hair and beard dripped with sweat. His bloodshot eyes started from their sockets. Foam flecked his lips, and from between them his tongue protruded, black and crackling.

The old man cringed at the sight.

"Tell him, sonny—you can tell him now!" he whimpered very softly.

So softly that by no chance could Red Peter have heard the admonition, nevertheless he told. In that moment his great fortitude failed him. He could bear the torture no longer. The bandit gave the thong a last vicious twist, and big, stolid Red Peter went to pieces.

"Over there in the corner—under the loose board!" he gasped as with his last breath.

The bandit acted upon the information without an instant's delay. He had the board up in a jiffy and in another jiffy the shot-bag, heavy with gold, was in his pocket.

But if he was prompt Black Peter was no less so. Pausing only long enough to see that the bandit had the treasure actually in his hand, the old man dodged nimbly around the corner of the cabin to the front door.

There rough boards laid loosely over sills of unhewn logs formed a sort of stoop. Black Peter caught up a chunk of firewood as he ran, and when he had come up to the stoop he knocked with the stick on the boards, a jumble of thumps in imitation of heavy, confused footfalls. It was rather well done, the effect so far as the sound went being not unlike that of a party of several come to the rescue; and to help out the illusion Black Peter clutched at the latch of the door and shook it violently, as if it were fastened and he were somebody trying hard to get in.

More strategy, of course. Black Peter waited till the bandit had the treasure in his hand because at that moment, with his purpose accomplished, he would be entirely ready to take his flight, and the thumping of fictitious footfalls out on the front stoop was to make sure that he fled by way of the back door. He might flee that way anyhow—most likely would indeed—but it was just as well to make sure.

Then too the sudden suggestion of pursuers close at hand was calculated to give his flight a more hasty character. Black Peter din't wish the bandit to feel that he had time to flash a torch ahead of him to see where he was going to step.

Strategy—and it so far worked out. When the old man ran back to the kitchen window and peered in there was nobody to be seen but Red Peter stretched out on the floor. Stealthily, not knowing yet what he might find, Black Peter crept around to the back door.

It was very still. A sick fear assailed him.

"The varmint—mebbe he jumped clean over!" he croaked.

But when, with quaking hand, he struck a match and held it down to the ground where he had set the trap, no trap was there—only the bare path worn smooth.

Black Peter lifted up his head.

"Eighty pound—sayin' nothin' about the weight of the trap!" he exulted, and laughed right out.

In the cabin Red Peter, utterly unmanned by the ordeal through which he had passed, was weeping like a baby.

"He's done gone—with the money!" he sobbed.

"He's done gone, but he won't go fer!" Black Peter cackled.

RED PETER'S shoulders were cruelly racked; but his legs were as good as ever, and it didn't take him long to get his nerve back and dash off down the valley to gather a party and go in pursuit of the bandit. Neighbors were more than eager to lend a hand in that kind of chase; the word spread rapidly, and by midnight the whole countryside was up in arms. The outlets toward the railroad were covered, and a ring of men was thrown out to embrace as much of the rough wilderness as might be.

Black Peter's prophecy was amply justified in the event—they caught the bandit at last within two miles of the cabin. Not till after daylight, however, for the neighbors, prudently mindful of the gun he carried, closed in very cautiously.

But their apprehensions were groundless—the scoundrel had no heart left for shooting. In fact he was glad to give himself up in order to be rid of the bear-trap which had him by the leg and wasn't to be made to let go by any device at his command. Without the help of the clamps the springs could not be crowded down and the jaws released, and so the fellow had dragged the trap after him, with the heavy log-chain locked securely to it, until he was exhausted with pain and the loss of blood and crumpled down in the thicket where they found him. The trap had caught his right leg just over the ankle, and it had bitten to the bone, chewing like a thing alive till the flesh hung in shreds.

Black Peter was wild with delight. In fact there was something almost fiendish in the way he danced about the anguished outlaw.

"Hurt ye, eh? Hi, yi—I reckon!" he crowed, and when he was prevailed upon at length to go and fetch the clamps he didn't hurry a bit.

HILLBILLIES stood guard till the sheriff came, and the bandit's mangled leg gave him no peace meanwhile. They pitied his suffering at length and did what they could to ease it; but at best their rude arts availed little. He was a gritty fellow, and he didn't whimper; but the experience and the reflections it prompted so far affected his outlook that he had some disclosures to make when the sheriff arrived.

"What do I gain by being the goat?" he demanded.

"You can search me!" the sheriff replied, and with that they two went into close conference.

Hillbillies weren't permitted to hear what passed between the officer and his prisoner; but at the end of the conference a deputy was summoned to take charge of the bandit.

"You'll have to step lively," the outlaw warned the sheriff. "The minute that crook hears I've been caught he'll drop out of sight."

The sheriff took the advice to heart. No grass grew under his feet that day. The deputy forthwith conveyed the bandit to the county jail and had no more than cleverly landed him behind the bars there when the sheriff drove up with John Avery in custody and landed him in a like manner.

They two were partners—John Avery

and the bandit, according to the bandit's testimony. The trick they had come so near playing out to a successful finish with the Spadeses was a trick they had counted upon repeating often up there among the hillbillies, who wanted the pay for their land in cash and who would sooner bury their money in the ground than deposit it in a bank. John Avery's part was to buy; and when he had bought and paid over the money he was to pass the word to the bandit, and the bandit was to do as he had done that night, and between them they expected to acquire the land for nothing.

Black Peter journeyed down to the jail and danced in front of John Avery's cell.

"Didn't I tell ye? The wicked shall prosper for a season, jest as the Good Book says, and then their calamity comes on them and they're broken suddenly—suddenly shall they be broken and without remedy!" he declaimed and had to be led away at last.

The Spadeses tarried in those parts no longer than was needful in order to give in their evidence at the trial.

"I don't admire to live in a kentry where you kain't have money without somebody wantin' to murder ye for it!" sniffed Black Peter, and while Red Peter had nothing to say the sentiment was plainly unanimous in the family.

ORIGIN OF THE GIPSIES

by George Gatlin

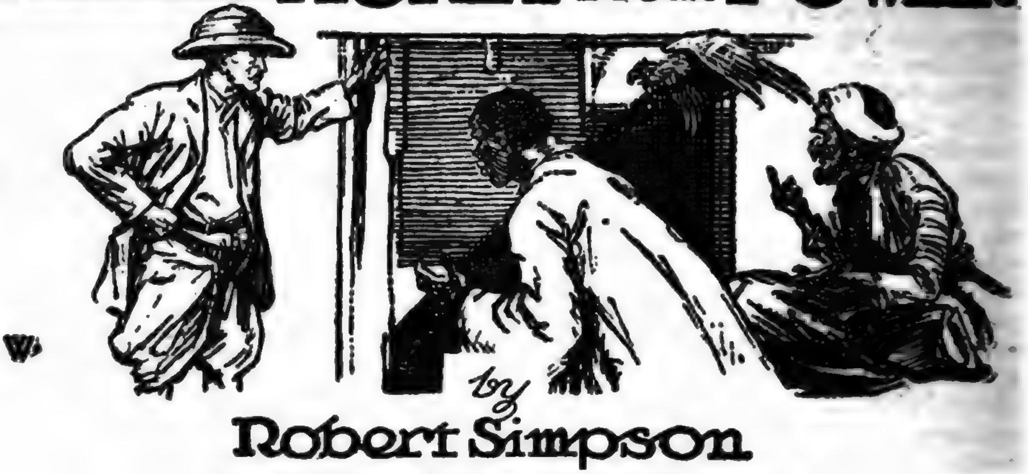
IT IS not uncommon for boastful Gipsies to claim direct descent from the Pharaohs. There are no records of the origin of the race, and many among them believe the apocryphal story used five hundred years ago to explain the appearance of their people in eastern Europe. When their nomadic ancestors entered Europe they claimed to be Egyptians, a tribe banished from their own country and condemned to wander for the sin of refusing hospitality to the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus during their flight into Egypt.

This strange story has been told and retold until the Gipsies themselves accept it as authentic history. It is doubtful, however, if they were the originators of the legend. At the time of their invasion of Europe it was customary to attach a religious significance to everything, and it is probable that the story originated among Europeans who knew the prophecies of Ezekiel. The story benefited the extraordinary wanderers and they adopted it. Posing as Egyptian penitents, they lived for a while unmolested. Popes and kings protected them. So effective was the story in arousing interest and awe, and in gaining privileges among Christian people, that the Gipsies used it advantageously as they moved onward through Europe. One Lorenzo Palmireno, an able scholar of the sixteenth century, wrote: "They pretend that they come from Lower Egypt, and that they wander about as a penance, and to prove this they show a letter from the King of Poland. They lie, however, for they do not lead the life of penitents, but of dogs and thieves."

In English-speaking countries these picturesque and mysterious wanderers, maintaining the integrity of their race under the most adverse conditions, have been called Egyptians, Giptians and Gipsies. They call themselves Romani. A written description of the first Gipsies to appear in Paris, in the year 1427, accurately describes those of today, whether in America, Russia or Spain. Their style of dress has changed little since the Middle Ages. It resembles the dress of the nomads of India. Their peculiarities of dress, features, color, habits and character indicate the oriental origin of the race.

The Gipsy language, Romanes, is the most important and dependable clue in determining the origin of the race. The loanwords found in it enable the student to retrace the wanderings of these nomads through eastern Europe back finally to India. The number of borrowed words even gives some idea of the length of time spent in the countries through which they passed. There are a large number of Persian, Armenian, Slavonic, Rumanian and Magyar words. The bulk of the words, however, are Indian or Hindustani. This secret tongue, which resembles Sanskrit, is evidence that the Gipsies are neither Egyptians nor descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel, but that they originated in India.

NEITHER·MONEY·NOR·POWER



by

Robert Simpson

Author of "The Guest of Mohamed Sani," "Bad Business," etc.

IN THE Nigerias, between Kano and the sea, are many peoples. Some of them wear turbans and flowing robes and swear by the name of the Prophet. Some wear a loin-cloth and a six-inch bracelet of ivory, and feed luscious suckling-pigs to the python god of their fathers. Others wear tails, hunt heads and mumble their prayers to a twisted twig.

And all of them laugh, one at the other, and say—

"Your gods are false."

But whether they come from the land of Brass, within sound of the sea, or from the country of the tail-wearing Kagoro in the province of Nassarawa, or from out of the pink-walled cities of the Fulani, which are a kind of jeweled fringe on a corner of the Sahara, there is one god among them that is always the same, even though the shapes it takes may be different.

It is not money and it is not power. For these are worshiped only by such as are great and greedy.

Its name is vanity.

THERE was no medical officer attached to the government station at Faloji. It was only a small, flat roofed Fulani town in the southeast corner of the Province of Kano, and the name of government was represented by an assistant resident, a small body of native police, and sometimes a handful of the W. A. F. F. (West African Frontier Force).

When Rudd Haviland reached Faloji about ten o'clock one morning, he saw at once that there were no soldiers in the place. Even the police seemed to be missing.

So Haviland strolled inquiringly into the bungalow of the residency in search of some sign of authority, and finally came to a halt in the assistant resident's bedroom doorway.

The assistant resident was in bed with the mosquito-curtains thrown back. And even from the doorway Haviland could see that there were many days' growth of beard on his chin. Also, his head was rolling back and forth on the pillow and his hands were reaching upward and outward aimlessly.

"Sunstroke," Haviland decided mentally.

And the man on the bed said croakingly to no one in particular:

"Dark. Where's lantern? Lantern, bushman, lantern!"

And then there was a pause, followed by a stupid kind of smile.

"Oh," blankly. "That's it. Of course. Just a moment."

Having thus come to some kind of conclusion, he began poking his hand under the pillow, as if in search of something that would solve his problem. But his hand came out empty.

This seemed to puzzle him, but it was plain that he had no grip upon any thought for more than a few seconds on end, for he immediately proceeded to babble about several things that were altogether disconnected.

"Neither Money Nor Power," copyright, 1923, by Robert Simpson.

In the center of the room was an open tin trunk. It contents were strewed indiscriminately about the floor, and, kneeling beside it, with his back toward Haviland, was a native who was trying to fasten a stiff white collar about his neck without the aid of a collar button.

Evidently he was the sick man's house-boy, and he had apparently listened to his master's babblings long enough to be able to pay no attention to them. In addition to the collar, he was garbed in a pair of the assistant resident's mosquito boots, a white silk skirt and a cummerbund of dark red.

He was so intent upon the white collar problem, and the assistant resident's chattering delirium was so incessant, that he did not suspect Haviland's presence until the latter had taken a few steps into the room.

Then, turning his head sharply, the boy emitted a thick, frightened scream, leaped to his feet and sprang for the nearest window. A moment later he was dashing madly across a patch of lawn in the rear of the residency toward the small outbuilding that served as a kitchen.

Haviland walked toward the bed.

His business in life was largely a matter of chance, and his presence anywhere in Nigeria was covered vaguely by the simple and all-embracing word "shooting." And his tendency to wander hither and thither in pursuit of anything that might be likely to happen, had made his name almost as familiar in the mangrove swamps of the Delta as in the provinces of Kano and Sokoto.

His tall, somewhat spare figure, his powerful but unobtrusive hands and arms, his lean, rather long face, set with quiet gray eyes that seemed to be always hopefully engaged in turning everything inside out, all spoke of a man who did not wait for life to come to him, but who went persistently in search of it, smoking long, thin black cheroots and smiling occasionally at what he found.

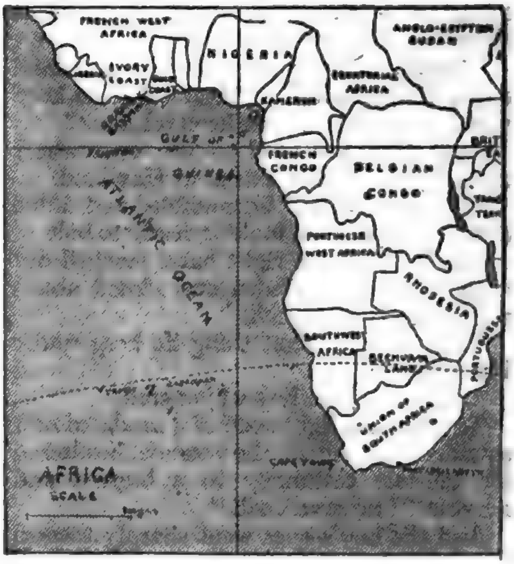
Sometimes he laughed.

But it was said in strictly confidential native circles that it was not good to make the *Bature* Haviland laugh. For, when he did, a black or a brown man died! A certain donkey caravan driver of Kano, whose name was Awudu, believed this implicitly.

HAVILAND wasted no time in proceeding to discover just how sick the assistant resident was, and in making every effort to try to make him less sick as rapidly as possible. A temperature that was the barest fraction under 105 degrees, and an utter incapacity to understand anything that was said to him, summed up the sick man's case exactly.

He did not seem to detect any difference between Haviland and his house-boy. But it was plain that his obsession of being always in the dark was the most persistent. Always he came back to this, and always, as if he suddenly understood just what was the matter, he would paw around under his pillow in search of something or other he seemed to think would bring him relief.

Haviland had never seen him before; he was on the verge of sending his own Kroo house-boy to look for the Hausa sergeant of police, or the orderly, when the sick man's house-boy came cautiously back again.



He was now a humble and chastened youth, clothed in a cheap singlet and an ordinary print over-cloth, but though he was shiveringly prepared for a flogging, he was apparently determined to get it over with. In a very small voice, he said that his name was Gif, and that his people were Ijo; which meant that he was a long way from home, since the habitat of the Ijo was the Delta swamps south of Gana Gana.

"What him name?" Haviland asked, indicating the man on the bed.

"Mas' Darron, sah. He be new residen' foh dis place. T'ree moon pass, me an' him, we come from Zungeru."

Zungeru was the capital of Northern Nigeria and the governor's headquarters.

"How long time he sick?" Haviland asked.

"Pass seven day, sah."

"How he catch sun?"

Gif hesitated long enough to make Haviland instantly suspicious.

"I—I no savez, sah."

This meant that Gif did know how his master had been sun-struck, but for some mysterious reason did not want to tell.

"Where is sergeant for police? Where orderly go?"

Gif hurried to explain that the Hausa police sergeant's mother was ailing and he had gone to visit her, and added that possibly the rest of the police was taking a day off in consequence.

At this point the assistant resident began talking about the "dark" again, and once more pawed under his pillow in search of something that was not there.

"What's matter he do so?" Haviland asked Gif abruptly. "What thing he keep under him pillow before he catch sun?"

And Gif's eyes tried to look everywhere at once; everywhere except at Haviland.

"I no savez, sah," he mumbled and sidled away a step or two, making ready to bolt.

Haviland's large right hand reached out with startling swiftness and closed about the boy's clammy neck.

"Talk true! What thing he keep under him pillow?"

"I—no fit!" the boy whimpered.

Then, as the light scuff of a sandaled foot sounded suddenly on the veranda, he altered his tell-tale testimony to a hurried and nervous "I no savez, sah."

And the boy's eyes went sharply toward the doorway in search of approval. Haviland slowly turned his head.

A tall and comparatively young Fulani was standing in the doorway, and, in turban and flowing *tobe*, with the government's official stave of office stuck out at arms-length before him, it was apparent that he wanted Haviland's first impression to be of the best. Also he had evidently been advised of Haviland's presence at the residency.

"Hail."

The word, spoken in sonorous Fulani, was respectful enough, and it ignored Gif and his anxiety very carefully.

"Hail."

Haviland returned the greeting as a matter of course, releasing Gif for the time being and moving steadily toward the doorway.

"And peace be with you."

"And to you peace," Haviland completed, casually bundling the Fulani out on to the veranda with him.

The visitor did not like this. His name was Abdulahi, and he was the government-appointed *balogun* of Faloji, which, though a chieftainship of the lesser order, was none the less important in the eyes of Abdulahi. A single glance told Haviland that the vanity of the *balogun* of Faloji was a god above all other gods.

When they had solemnly introduced each other, and Abdulahi had assimilated Haviland's name, his eyes narrowed sharply, then opened wide in bland inquiry.

"You are traveling beyond Faloji—to the south?" he asked in Fulani.

"When the fever of the resident has left him," Haviland admitted, deliberately giving him the information he wanted.

"That is a good thing," Abdulahi lied simply, and cursed Haviland obscenely under his breath.

He did not like the thought of having Haviland in his town for several days or weeks as the case might be.

"And that son of a blind camel, has he told you that I have watched many hours by the bed of the resident? Till my eyes burned with fire and there was no more blood below my knees. Has he told you that?"

"Gif?"

Abdulahi grunted a most ungenerous affirmative.

"He is the son of the cockroach on which vile Yoruba men make their dinner. And all men know he is a thief. There are many things he would steal if I did not watch."

"The resident will surely thank you when the fever has left him," Haviland promised dryly, and offered Abdulahi a cheroot and a light.

Behind a cloud of smoke, the Fulani's eyes again narrowed and, after a solemn minute or so of most dignified silence, he asked—

"You are sure that the resident will once more sit in judgment upon my people?"

"As sure as the rising of the sun makes the dark to fly away."

Haviland was a long way from being as sure as this of Darron's recovery, but when he said it he watched the Fulani's face in a dreamy, disinterested kind of way, as if he were lazily turning him inside out.

Abdulahi smiled, ejaculated his praise and thankfulness to Allah, and indicated that nothing short of divine intervention could have sent so great a healer of the sick to the resident's bedside at such a crucial moment.

He repeated variations of this several times, and his smile seemed to grow broader and rather less convincing every second. Haviland detected an eager, shifty glint in his eyes that hinted at a consuming desire to be off. And when he did go, after an interchange of the usual polite amenities, Haviland watched him striding across the patch of lawn until he had disappeared beyond the flat-roofed, pink-walled police barracks.

Then Haviland turned toward the bedroom again to resume the interrogation of Gif from a different angle. He noted that, though Gif was no longer in the room, he had returned Darron's miscellaneous wardrobe to the trunk, and had moved the trunk to one side of the room. Also, he had drawn the mosquito-curtains very carefully, tucking the ends under the mattress.

Haviland went softly toward the bed, saw that Darron was quiet for the nonce at least; and then, because the mosquito-curtain was tucked in so tightly, he saw, immediately behind Darron's pillow, a slit in the curtain that had plainly been made to accommodate the insertion of a covetous hand.

Haviland's eyebrows lifted a little, and when he had stroked his chin for a while, he called his own Kroo house-boy, left him in charge of the sick-room and went thoughtfully in search of Gif.

He found the Ijo in the kitchen annex with a brown leather legging decorating one forearm. He was supposed to be polishing the legging, but he was spending fifty-five seconds of every minute studying the sartorial effect of the legging on his arm.

When Haviland entered he came instantly to his feet and his eyes went naturally toward Haviland's right hand, but since there was no hippo-hide—or anything else that suggested corporal punishment—in that hand, he tried to assume an attitude of docile attention, and awaited Haviland's slightest demand.

Haviland ordered a lime juice he did not particularly want, then asked abruptly—

"*Balogun* stay plenty long time 'longside Mas' Darron bed?"

"N—no—yessah," Gif finally decided; and thus told Haviland quite plainly that he was in no little fear of saying anything that would put the *balogun* in a bad light.

"What thing Mas' Darron keep under him pillow all time?"

"I no savez, sah."

This was unhesitating enough this time, but Gif immediately nullified the effect of it, by adding plaintively:

"I be small-boy Ijo boy, sah. I no savez sick man palaver."

Haviland took a gold piece from his pocket, held it between his finger and thumb and studied it from several angles.

Gif watched him. He knew the gold piece was equal to a month's wages. Also, because he was a small-boy Ijo, he knew he was going to lie two and perhaps three times—well, he did not know what he would buy with the money. But it would not be mosquito-boots. They hurt his feet.

Consequently, something less than five minutes later, Haviland emerged from the kitchen and strolled back to the sick-room. He was smiling slightly, but the rather dreamy, thoughtful look in his eyes had deepened.

After he had despatched a mounted Fulani messenger to the nearest government station that boasted a doctor, he sat beside Darron's bed all afternoon, trying to devise ways and means of putting Gif's information to proper account.

And by nightfall he knew that the need for decided action was becoming hourly more and more imperative. The sick man's temperature was higher than it had been in the morning. His babblings were becoming weaker and less and less coherent, until the conception that he was groping about in the dark alone remained with any sureness.

Haviland waited until after dinner. Then, since Abdulahi seemed to be extremely careful not to come to him, Haviland once more left his Kroo-boy in possession of the sick-room, and went to Abdulahi.

ABDULAHI knew Darron was going to die.

He had known it for several days; ever since Darron had been taken with a fever and had strayed out into the sun in search of the Light which Abdulahi had so carefully removed from under his pillow while he slept.

And when the *Bature* Haviland had said that Darron would live, Abdulahi had laughed deep in his throat—without a sound. He knew that *Bature* Haviland lied. And he made doubly sure of this when he returned to his flat-roofed house of pink clay. For there, as he had suspected, he discovered that the Light was still dim and, Abdulahi was certain, growing dimmer.

Only he knew this. Only he knew there was a Light that told the truth about the approaching death of the resident. No one else in his household had seen this thing; not as Abdulahi saw it. Until the resident died, no one would. After that, of course——

At this point Abdulahi was forced to confess to himself that he was only hopefully guessing that the Light would become bright and clear again after the resident died. This was what he wanted to happen. Otherwise his hopes would be wasted things, and the life of the resident go for naught.

Now, as he sat alone within the best room of his house, and tried to comport himself after the manner of the Sarikin Galoda who was his model—as an emperor might be the model for a lesser prince—Abdulahi dreamed after his own fashion until his vanity was soothed into a purring contentment.

For, after the resident died and the Light became bright again, there would be no *balogun* in all the province of Kano who would compare with Abdulahi, *Balogun* of Faloji.

Occasionally, just to be quite sure, his hand reached within the generous folds of his several *tobes* and came forth again, perfectly satisfied that the Light was still there.

Then he would smoke another of Darron's cigarets—the tin at his side had been on Darron's bedroom table when Darron first had gone down with an attack of malaria fever—and he would blow thin streams of smoke toward the vaulted ceiling just as he had seen Darron do in his lazy moments.

Then the squawk of a parrot, the yelp of a dog and the hurried entrance of a scrawny slave, all told Abdulahi that he had a visitor, and he cursed the slave without stint when he heard the visitor's name.

Haviland came into the flickering light of the small colored lamps, and made no pretense of having come to stay. His expression was as serious as the time at his disposal was short.

"The resident is near to death," he said, when the customary greetings had been disposed of.

"Allah be merciful!"

"And it would be well for the Balogun of Faloji to wait by the bedside till the hour strikes."

Again, in sing-song fashion, Abdulahi called upon Allah and the Prophet to intervene; wrung his hands and declared that there would be no more laughter in Faloji if the resident died, and that the beards of the young men would become white from that hour.

And he made no objection to accompanying Haviland. In fact, his pride of place was flattered by the thought that Haviland considered his presence at the resident's bedside necessary, and in a few minutes his hurried preparation was completed, and they passed out of the house.

All the way to the residency, Abdulahi continued to mumble scattered bits of the Koran, to misquote certain wise sayings of the Fulani *mallams* that had reference to death, and to lift his voice every now and then in exaggerated praise of the virtues of the dying resident.

And it was not until they reached the residency veranda that Haviland suddenly clapped his great right hand over the Fulani's mouth from behind.

His left, just as suddenly, gripped Abdulahi's wrist, and with a quick twist, pulled the arm back and up. In a second, the *balogun*, who could not even gasp, was as helpless as he was utterly without the power of expression.

Naturally, his first inclination was to release his jaws from the most painful pressure of Haviland's hand. And it was thus early in his captivity that he knew just what manner of man Haviland was. His fingers were like lean bars of iron, and his thumb, fastening itself under Abdulahi's jaw-bone pressed deep into his neck below the ear in a manner that made resistance both painful and useless.

And, employing Abdulahi's left arm as a kind of steering-wheel, Haviland guided him into the sick-room.

At this strange intrusion, the Kroo-boy who had been left in charge rose, showing most of the whites of his eyes. He was more or less accustomed to Haviland's fondness for the unexpected, but he never ceased to be surprized at the results.

"Bring rope," Haviland ordered quietly, then growled in Fulani to his captive: "Peace, small thief. The softer your tongue the smaller the ache in your body."

In another minute or two, the Kroo-boy had efficiently bound Abdulahi's ankles and wrists. Then Haviland, still taking the precaution to prevent any outcry, proceeded to search the *balogun* thoroughly in the hope that he might save himself the trouble of asking questions and of listening to many lies.

Abdulahi's eyes screeched loudly enough in his fear, but Haviland did not mind this so long as his tongue was silent, and presently, in the innermost recesses of the *balogun's* several *tobes* and twisted cloth waist-band Haviland found what he was looking for.

Without a sign of triumph or exultation he placed it gently under Darron's pillow, thereafter tucking in the mosquito bar as before.

Then he sat the now shivering Fulani down in a chair beside the bed, drew in another for himself, and answered the *balogun's* first whimpering question almost before it was asked.

"You have said you have sat beside his bed till your eyes burned as with fire, and there was no more blood below your knees," Haviland reminded him simply. "This was the lie of a very small thief. But now, you will sit beside his bed until he lives—or dies. And if he dies, Abdulahi will also die."

Haviland did not altogether mean this, even though he knew that the *balogun* would be indirectly responsible for Darron's death if the latter did not rally before sunrise. But he did mean that Abdulahi was going to have the lesson of his life in the interval of waiting. And the lesson began in the first second.

The Fulani whined, then cursed, then screeched. But Haviland silenced him with a towel bound tightly over his mouth, and only Abdulahi's eyes spoke after that. The things they said and did to Haviland were many and varied and mostly unpleasant, but the fear that was behind it all grew bigger and bigger until there was no room left in them for anything else.

In the two hours between eight and ten o'clock, Abdulahi had died many times. By eleven, he was trying to get out of the chair so that he could grovel before Haviland and lick his feet. By twelve, his staring eyes, shifting alternately from Haviland to Darron, were shot with blood. His lean, red-brown face had assumed a sickly, gray-yellow hue.

The god of his vanity was the least of all gods then.

And in these few hours, Darron had scarcely stirred. There were moments when Abdulahi's breath stopped its jerky, stertorous passage though his nose, and his eyes gaped at the motionless figure on the bed, wondering if Darron were dead. Then a slight movement of the sick man's head, or the still more slight crooking of a finger, would start the Fulani's breath rushing back and forth in his nostrils with a sound that sobbed; and for another little while Abdulahi would take his eyes away from the bed and try to make some impression on Haviland.

Haviland paid no attention to him.

He watched Darron with a kind of dreamy expectancy as if he were waiting for something to happen; something he knew would surely happen if Darron had not already given up the fight.

And shortly before one o'clock, it did.

Darron's arms lifted a little and his lips moved. What he said could not be distinguished, but after his hands had groped feebly, as if he were finding his way in the dark, they stopped groping all at once, and he turned over on his side. This movement was mechanical; like that of a toy in which the mechanism is running down.

His hand slipped under the pillow with a flopping movement that had no strength in it and presently came forth bearing a lean black case.

Haviland rose quietly to his feet, threw back the mosquito-curtains, and, taking hold of Darron's left hand, helped him to do the thing he was so mechanically intent upon.

And, in a second or two, the lean black case lay empty on the bed, under Darron's right hand, while Darron himself, once more at rest on his back, had a pair of heavily rimmed tortoise-shell spectacles hooked over his ears.

WHEN the doctor arrived the following day, there was no sign of Abdulahi, the *balogun*, beside Darron's bed. Darron was "coming back," and, being no longer in the dark, was making much better progress.

It was about a week later that he said to Haviland:

"Of course, I'm terribly short-sighted. Can't see a yard in front of me without my specs. So I always keep them under my pillow and make a grab for them when I wake up. And I suppose when I was chattering about the dark and pawing around, as you say I did, I was really trying to get up, but a kind of instinct told me I couldn't till I found them."

Haviland puffed on a thin black cheroot.

"It would he interesting," he said, after a pause, "to know why Abdulahi hung on to them so persistently. He couldn't possibly have made any use of them."

"No, of course not. He couldn't see a thing with them. Nothing more than a blur."

"And it isn't like those fellows to keep things they find are of no use to them. Particularly when it is both easy and much less dangerous to put them back."

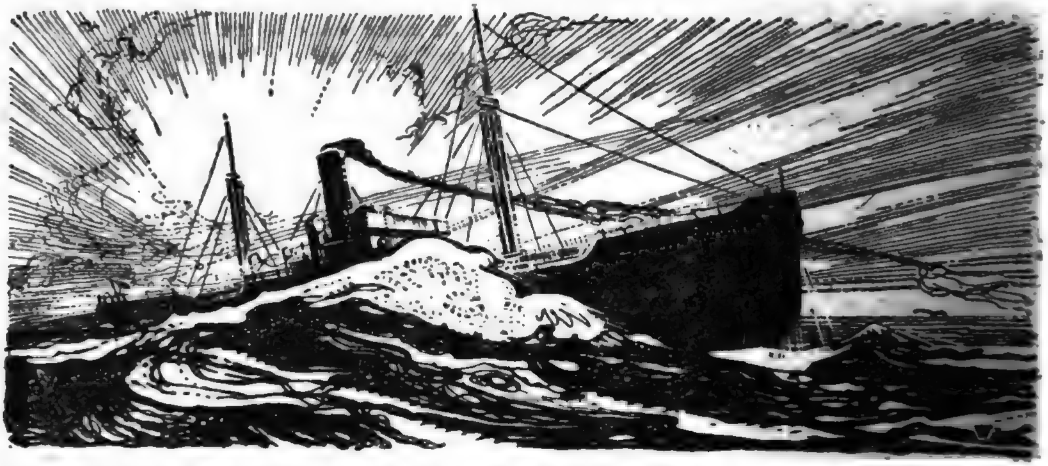
* * *

BUT Abdulahi could have explained simply enough why he had been unable to see anything through Darron's glasses.

For, now that the resident was well again, Abdulahi was sure the Light was no longer blurred and that, given the opportunity, he could see with them, even as Darron saw.

He was not, however, in the least likely to try the experiment.

The god of vanity has few, if any, worshipers in a chain-gang.



THE TRAMP

Conclusion

by W. Townend

Author of "The Trimmer," "Angel," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

JIMMY KERRILL, the second mate of the *Medea*, was Irish, with all of an Irishman's virtues and a few of his failings. So nothing was more natural than that he should pick a quarrel with a dapper, conceited little man because the latter had insulted a woman. Then he went on his way to keep an appointment with Eileen Mavison.

He was surprized to find the man he had quarreled with was Grinton, Eileen's stepfather, who ordered Kerrill out of the house, warning him that his present voyage on the *Medea*—owned by Grinton—would be the last.

Grinton, badly pressed for money, persuaded Captain "Black John" Dorrock to scuttle the *Medea*—Dorrock consenting only because he needed money for his sick wife's sake, although Grinton would advance him none.

While Dorrock was discussing ways and means with his chief engineer, Lappett, the first mate, entered and tried to get the captain to smuggle dope.

"I wouldn't touch the stuff," Black John said slowly. "Not with a barge-pole," and kicked Lappett out of his house.

Lappett suspected that something crooked was afoot, and he wanted to have a finger in the pie.

On sailing-day Eileen came down to say good-by to Jimmy and reminded him of their childhood friendship. Grinton also came to the ship to have a last word with the captain, and asked Black John to put Kerrill out of the way.

Just before sailing-time the last of the crew tumbled aboard—all drunk—and among them was a red-headed man. He was practically unconscious. As soon as he came to his senses he demanded that they put him ashore. He had been shanghaied, he said.

The *Medea* was not many days out at sea when Jimmy Kerrill called down the red-headed man, Hannigan, for bullying one of the crew. The two men came to blows.

Later Hannigan confided in Lappett that there was some one on the ship he was after.

"He'll be sorry he didn't see the last of me years ago—same as he hoped," said Hannigan.

Lappett, sensing that the man might be able to help him in the dope-smuggling scheme, decided to foster his friendship.

In a dense fog Black John by excellent seamanship narrowly averted a collision with two other ships.

"Near thing that," said Lappett with a quick look at Black John's face.

THREE days later when the *Medea* crawled into Halifax Harbor for orders, Black John Dorrock warned Lappett once again about dope-smuggling.

"If I find you've disobeyed me," he said, "then, by ——, I'll break you with my two hands."

The mate left the room muttering to himself:

"The —— old fool! —— him! There isn't a law he hasn't broken himself one time or other. An' now he's acting like he was pious."

Lappett hired Hannigan to bring a suit-case full of dope aboard. The captain, however, held up Hannigan, took the suit-case from him, smashed the lock and threw the evil packages it contained into the water.

Later, as he was returning aboard ship, Kerrill rescued Black John from a gang of thugs. Still later Jimmy, after a hard fight, prevented Hannigan from murdering the captain in his cabin.

"Was he tryin' to choke you?" Jimmy asked.

"You bet," answered Dorrock.

Then to Hannigan—

"Clear out of this or I'll kick you down the ladder."

And Hannigan went without answering.

The next morning, just after Chief Engineer MacGish had warned him to be on guard against Lappett, Dorrock received a cablegram that his wife was dead.

Lappett, having discovered that the *Medea* carried a fake cargo, resolved to come to a showdown with the captain.

"You're goin' ter scuttle yer ship," he said. "We needn't waste no time arguin'. You'll pay me fer the privilege or as soon as we reach dry land I'll split."

"Clear out, you rat," said Black John Dorrock.

On the trip home the *Medea* rolled badly, and the crew talked of the rats they had seen leaving the ship at Halifax.

And then, with a heavy sea running, the engines broke down.

"All hands on deck," Black John shouted, and the crew worked desperately to rig up sails—tarpaulin sails!

Sea after sea swept the decks—all boats were washed overboard—the ship was helpless.

The smoke of a liner appeared on the horizon. She hoisted the signal—

"Do you require assistance?"

"Mister," said Black John to the frightened Lappett, "we need no assistance. So answer."

For a moment the crew, headed by Lappett, threatened mutiny. But Black John's revolver carried the day—the offer of assistance was refused.

Soon word came from MacGish that repairs had been made.

"Full speed ahead," was the order, and the *Medea* wallowed through the storm.

Morning came—the storm increased in fury—the wind rose to a shriek.

"Oh, Gord! Oh, Gord!" Lappett screamed.

Jim Kerrill saw a wall of water towering over them like a cliff, curling slowly over.

Then he was conscious of a terrific jar as the water broke on the *Medea's* deck. The ship went down—down; it seemed as if she would never rise. Then she slowly rolled herself.

The port wing of the bridge had gone. Lappett had gone, too.

Black John, his face gray, his eyes shut, lay on his back, his legs dangling over the edge of the splintered woodwork where the bridge had broken.

"Mister, for Gord's sake, are we sinkin'?" one of the terrified crew asked.

"Don't jaw," said Jimmy. "Do as you're told. It's the ship you're paid to worry about—not yourself."

ON THE flooded well-deck, he and the two apprentices, Chayke and Radby, and the boatswain and carpenter, the surviving deck-hands, the cook and the mess-room lad, fought fiercely to batten down the hatches. Their fingers were bleeding and their nails cracked: great seas, that ran green over the bulwarks as the *Medea* rolled, swept over them; the fierce wind that tore the old tarpaulins into tatters made it difficult to get the new tarpaulins into place; spare hatches had to be sent for; the wooden wedges were swollen tight in their cleats, so that the iron battens were almost immovable. And yet Jimmy Kerrill knew that for once there would be no shirking, no holding back, no muttering against authority; whatever the deck-hands might be in port, however much they might growl and grumble and uphold their rights, here, in mid-Atlantic, their own lives were at stake, no less than the life of the ship.

The new tarpaulin had been fastened on to the No. 4 hatch. They were still struggling with the No. 5, when one of the deck-hands bellowed in Jimmy's ear—

"Sir, you're wanted!"

"Who the —— wants me now?" Jimmy lay on the bulging tarpaulin and cursed. "Lay on it! Tell 'em I can't come! For ——'s sake, some of you men, get busy! Chips, get those battens fixed. This side now. Garle, —— you! what the —— are you doing!"

Flotter, the steward, his face as white as the dirty white jacket that he wore even now, arrived at a run.

"Sir," he said, "the captain wants you, as soon as you can leave th' 'atches!"

"How is he?"

"Bad!" said Flotter.

"Bosun," said Jimmy, "you take charge!"

Jimmy followed the steward back along the after well-deck. He raised his eyes and saw Sandy Racken and the stokehold hands high up on the boat-deck, fighting to batten down the engine-room with tarpaulins. A tarpaulin had broken loose at one corner and they were trying to secure it.

"Whereabouts is he?" Jimmy shouted to the steward.

"In the chart-room."

"Then there's no one on the bridge!"

"Only the man at the wheel, sir."

Black John, still in his oilskins and sea-boots, lay on the settee, his face white and twisted with pain, his eyes fierce under the black brows.

"Come in, Kerrill," he said, "come in. You're in time."

"How d'you mean, sir?" said Jimmy.

But even before Black John answered him, he knew.

"I'm goin' fast," said Black John. "I thought I could last out; I couldn't. I've broken a leg an' my left arm's gone an' all my inside seems wrenched out o' place. Somethin's give somewhere! Where's the chief engineer?"

The door opened and MacGish, red-eyed, unshaven, filthy with coal-dust and grease, and drenched with sea-water, slipped into the room. The door slammed as the *Medea* rolled.

"John," he said, coming to the side of the settee, "what's this, eh? Man, ye maun pull yersel' taegither! What's wrang?"

"I'm dyin', that's all, Mac!" Black John's lips twitched in a grim little smile. "I'll be knockin' off the booze in another ten minutes or so for keeps. Mac, gimme a drink! You know where the bottle is."

He waited and went on more slowly, frowning.

"That's right. No water. It was old Lappett who had the last drink out o' that, Mac. Thankee."

He looked at Jimmy.

"Lift my head, son! Well, here's how!"

He drank the liquor and gave the glass back to the chief.

"How are things down below?"

"Bad," said MacGish, "but we'll hang on. We're battenin' doon wi' tarpaulins. The sea that carried away the skylights vera near washed us oot. I thocht we were deid, the lot of us!"

"Aye," said Black John. "So did I! An', Mac, I'm goin' fast, myself, as it is!"

His voice was so firm that Jimmy scarcely believed him.

"Mister." He was speaking to Jimmy. "Mister, you'll take over the ship. You've got your ticket. Not that it 'd matter, if you hadn't. You're captain. Chayke will have to be mate. Now, listen to me, son, the *Medea's* got to make port!"

Jimmy nodded, not understanding.

Black John went on.

"Mac, you'll find some papers I wrote out in my wallet. It's in my inside pocket. Can you get at it?"

He waited, breathing with a curious sobbing noise, while MacGish unbuttoned his oilskins and found the wallet.

"Open it, Mac. It's those sheets of blue paper, there. Thankee. Now, gimme a pen! Son." Again he spoke to Jimmy. "You got to hold me up. There ain't time to read it now. I'm goin' to sign. I want you for witness. The pair o' you. Chief, you're not mixed up in it!"

"That's a' richt, John," said MacGish.

Very slowly, Black John wrote his name in large, straggling characters.

"Now, Mac, you'll sign, an' then you, son." He watched them with dull eyes. "Kerrill, my wife was ordered abroad for her health. Grinton wouldn't advance me the few pounds I needed. He made me promise to scuttle the *Medea*. Then he'd pay me. I put it in writin', in case of—of inquiry, or trouble. My wife died while we were still in New York. The *Medea's* got to reach home. Understand!"

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"If Grinton had advanced me the money, an' he could have, Maggie'd be livin' now. Take the *Medea* home, son. I'd have done it, if I'd been able. But I can't. Goin' fast, Mac—goin' fast!"

It seemed that the strength that had held him up thus far was leaving him.

His breathing was growing more and more labored. There was a bluish tinge in his lips.

"Son, you'll take the *Medea* home!"

"I will, sir."

"An' why?" asked Black John faintly.

"My duty to."

The dying man grinned.

"Good boy! An' ruin Grinton! A bad man, Jimmy. Bad. If you win through, you're lucky. Bad weather ahead. Mebbe I judged you wrong. Mebbe you judged me wrong. Easy to talk, boy; easy to talk! Shake!" Jimmy took the hand that was thrust out to him. "Good lad! An' you'll get the *Medea* home!"

"I will," said Jimmy.

"Tell Hannigan—" The eyes were blazing. "That's not his name. Tell him I remember. I know him. Tell him I'm sorry. Tell him—" His mind seemed to be wandering. "Better go now, son. Goodby. Mac—wait. Wait with me! It's gettin' dark."

Jimmy stepped out on to the bridge, fighting the gale to keep the door from slamming. What Black John had told him had moved him more than he would have thought possible. And Lappett. Lappett had guessed right. Poor old Black John!

Presently the chief engineer came out of the chart-room.

"He's gaun!"

He stood by Jimmy's side, clinging to the rail.

"Dead!" said Jimmy.

"Aye," said MacGish. "Puir auld Johnny! Did ye ken that Sparks is deid, tae!"

"What's that?"

"Aye, washed ower the side when thon sea hit us. No wireless the rest o' the trip, Jimmy, an' ye ken what that means!"

Jimmy nodded. MacGish climbed down the starboard ladder without saying anything more.

After a time Jimmy turned and spoke to Hannigan.

"Captain Dorrock's dead. He told me to tell you he'd remembered you. He said he was sorry. I was to tell you."

For all the notice he took of what Jimmy had said to him Hannigan might never have heard a word. He stood, giving the wheel an occasional turn, easing the ship as she rolled and staring straight ahead into the gale through the broken wheel-house windows, his eyes puckered, his face set in grim lines.

"Sir!"

"Well," said Jimmy.

"Did Captain Dorrock say anything more; where it was he knew me, or what I was, or anything?"

"No," said Jimmy. "Nothing more than I said."

Hannigan nodded.

THAT same afternoon Black John Dorrock was buried.

The service was short, as the *Medea* was still rolling badly.

Jimmy Kerrill read snatches from the prayer book, clinging to a life-line.

"We therefore commit his body to the deep to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead——"

The body, sewn up in canvas with firebars at its feet, slid from a hatch over the bulwark rail into the swirling water.

Jimmy shivered and finished the service quickly.

A curious sense of loneliness gripped him. Black John had gone. So had Lappett. He was captain, with no one to help share his responsibility.

The men who clung, as he clung, to the life-lines, deck-hands in oilskins, engineers, firemen, the cook, the steward, the mess-room lad, depended on his skill and knowledge. Even MacGish, the chief engineer. If he failed, then there was little hope.

But then—Jimmy pressed his lips firmly together—then he must not fail.

"—be with us all evermore. Amen."

A sea swept over the weather bulwarks.

"Mind yourselves!" some one shouted.

The men on the well-deck scattered.

XIII

SANDY RACKEN sat on the settee in his room, smoking and reading a seventeen days' old New York newspaper, wedged tight, his back against the side of his bunk, his feet pressed against his washstand, so that however much the *Medea* might roll he could not fall. The floor was covered by dirty water that splashed from side to side. The roof leaked. The atmosphere was close and damp.

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Sandy.

Jimmy Kerrill, in oilskins and sou'wester and sea-boots, entered and stood, dripping sea-water.

"The chief told me you'd been feeling bad!"

"Me no more'n any one else," said Sandy. "Sir!"

"Chuck it, Sandy!" said Jimmy. "It's getting stale."

"All right, James, but if I can't say 'sir' to the captain of the *Medea* who can I say 'sir' to, eh?"

"Not to me, my lad!" Jimmy clung to the edge of Sandy's bunk. "Rolling prettily, isn't she? Sea's rising again."

Sandy's smile faded.

"My ——!" he said. "Roll! I'm sick of it, Jimmy. Down below, it's fair ——ish! Old Grinton ought to be strung up!"

"How d'you mean?"

"Sendin' us across the West'ard this time of year, with engines like ours! He was warned, I know for a fact! He doesn't care, not a ——! Why should he? If we go, he pouches the insurance! That's that! All he need do then is to build another old tramp an' hire another old crew an' sit on his hams in his office an' ask for another bottle of fizz to be brought in! Jimmy, if the *Medea* was in bad shape when we left New York, now, by ——, she's about droppin' to pieces. If ever she reached her survey, they'd condemn her at sight! When I'm down below an' we're rollin' bad, same as we are now, an' I see the plates in the engine-room leavin' the angle-irons by five, six inches, I'm scared: scared sick! If there's any justice at all, Jimmy, there's a separate hell set apart for ship-owners of Grinton's breed! He an' the likes of him will be standin' a watch for all eternity, in an engine-room like ours, with the fear of Lord only knows what in their rotten hearts, an' the devil himself drivin' 'em! An' me, Jimmy, if I'm good enough, if I manage to scrape through on Peter's blind side, mebbe I'll wangle the job of comin' down the ladder at eight bells an' sayin': 'Hi, Grinton, the watch is over, but chief engineer's compliments, an' will you take the next watch as well! That'd be all the heaven I'd want!"

Jimmy, looking at Sandy's tired face and dull eyes, nodded.

"What's wrong with you, Sandy?"

"Three days neuralgia, without any let up. Nothin' to show, Jimmy, but I'm half-crazy with pain." He grinned. "What's the odds? Won't you sit down a while, Jimmy?"

"No, got to be going back again to the bridge."

"You're not sparin' yourself, are you?"

"I dunno. Perhaps not! Why should I, anyway?"

"Still hatin' yer job, Jimmy?"

Jimmy gave a shrug of his shoulders.

"In a way. Yes."

He paused and stared at the wall opposite, covered with photographs of Sandy Racken's female relatives.

"And in a way, no. Once I'd as soon have been sweeping the streets of Cardiff as second mate on a tramp like this. There was just as much chance of going ahead. But now—well, now, Sandy, I'm here, still second mate of the *Medea*, and I've got to make good, whether I like it or not. What's more, I can."

"Aye, you can! An' what's changed you, Jim? Or who? Black John, Lappett, MacGish, me—who was it?"

"I never thought there was much hope for me, Sandy—I never cared—until——"

He wondered, then, whether he were saying too much.

"Miss Mavison, eh!" said Sandy.

Jimmy nodded.

"I thought so," said Sandy. "Jimmy, you're a lucky man."

"But good Lord!" said Jimmy. "Don't you run away with the idea I'm anything to her. I'm not."

Sandy clucked his tongue incredulously.

"It's the truth," said Jimmy. "I'm nothing to her, and she's nothing to me. Not the way you think. Lord, no! But, I tell you, if it wasn't for what she said to me, Sandy, I'd have no faith in myself or anything else! Understand! She's a corking good sort, anyway! And Grinton's her step-father!"

Sandy Racken sighed.

"Wish I was you, James! Wish I was you!"

"Gosh! I'm tired!" said Jimmy.

"When did you last sleep?"

"Dunno. I've got the bosun and young Toby Chayke standing the watches, but I'm on the bridge a good deal, of course."

"A good deal!" said Sandy. "——! That means you've glued yourself there! You're a blazin' fool, Jimmy! Two days after you've brought the ship into Cardiff, with great credit to yourself, and before the newspapers are tired of printin' yer picture in yer best brass-button uniform, we'll be treadin' the earth down on yer little coffin! The *Medea* won't sink just because you're not on deck! Go an' turn in a while!"

"Glass has fallen since daybreak, Sandy. I don't like the look of it!"

"Wish it would stop rollin'," said Sandy. "That's all I'm troublin' about."

Jimmy went out on deck and made his way to the bridge.

It was now half-past one in the afternoon; snowflakes had been sweeping down since morning without a break; the wind blew in fierce gusts from the northwest; sea and sky were a dull gray color, and no horizon was visible; the *Medea* pounded slowly ahead on her course, rolling heavily.

Chayke, the apprentice, was taking the afternoon watch.

Jimmy stood by his side, gazing out over the rough plank barrier that had been built up where the bridge had been carried away.

Presently he said:

"Chayke, I'm dog tired. I'm going to turn in."

HE HAD been asleep not more than ten minutes when he awoke with a start. For a moment he lay on the settee in the chart-room, under a blanket, listening, scarcely conscious as yet of anything save that he was still tired. And then, all at once, he became aware, through some inner sense, that something was wrong.

He raised himself to a sitting position.

And then he slid to the floor in sudden panic. The rolling of the ship was worse. She was off her course, surely—swinging beam on, helplessly—and yet there was no breakdown. The beat of the engines came to his ears, muffled but unmistakable.

He dragged on his rubber boots and without waiting for his oilskins hurried out on to the bridge. It was still snowing. Chayke stood at the head of the ladder, looking aft, an uneasy, frightened look in his face.

"What's up?" said Jimmy sharply. "My ——! Look at her head! We're broaching to again!"

"She won't answer her helm, sir," said Chayke. "I've sent aft to find out what's wrong. I dunno whether it's on the wheel chains or the quadrant or what!"

"It's jammed, sir," said the man at the wheel.

Jimmy turned to Chayke.

"Run aft like ——, and see what's happened!"

On the poop, rising and falling, as the vessel pitched, he could see the figures of three men in oilskins, clinging on, and apparently gazing over the stern.

A wave crashed over the port quarter and hid the men on the poop. Jimmy watched in an agony of impatience and breathed more esily when they reappeared, but the bow had been driven still farther off the course. Chayke reached the poop. One of the men waved his hand, almost as if driving him away.

The engine-room whistled up through the tube. Jimmy heard faintly, amid the noise of the cranks, the chief's voice asking what was wrong.

"Dunno! Won't answer her helm!"

Chayke reached the bridge, breathless and scared.

"Rudder's gone, sir!"

Jimmy stared at him blankly. He could neither speak nor think. The rudder gone—in mid-Atlantic—the wind rising and no wireless! The burden seemed heavier than he could bear. He felt sick and miserable and frightened. The rudder gone. Then the *Medea* was as good as lost.

And Grinton!

More than anything it was the thought of Grinton that brought him to himself and gave him back courage and energy and will-power. The *Medea* lost! To —— with that kind of talk! They were still afloat!

"Chief!" He shouted down the tube. "Rudder's gone. I want to speak to you."

He left Chayke on the bridge and hurried aft.

From now on, so he told himself, he was to be an optimist; maintaining, whatever the evidence before his senses, that there was no danger; or, if danger, no cause for alarm; however bad the conditions might be, they would take the *Medea* home!

As he reached the after well-deck, the gray-haired bos'n came out of his room.

"As if we hadn't had all we can stand!" he growled.

The little carpenter and Hannigan and one of the other deck-hands were on the poop which had been swept clear of the rails and hand steering-gear five days before when Black John had died.

"Take care, sir," said the boatswain. "For —— sake, don't go runnin' no risks!"

The *Medea's* stern rose high up in the air as her bow dipped. Jimmy grasped the leads on the starboard side and leaned forward, craning his neck. Deep down under the counter, the snow in his eyes, he could see that the rudder had gone. The sea, a vivid, cold green, shot up swiftly. The boatswain hauled him back by the arm, and they clung to the quadrant.

"Let's get out of this!" said Jimmy. "There's work ahead of us, bos'n! Hard work! —— hard!"

He spoke easily, but never before in all his life had he known how fear could cripple a man. He felt numbed, stifled, bewildered. And he was responsible. There was no Black John now for him to lean on, or ask advice from; he was responsible; no one else.

"Bos'n, we'll set the after-sails again as quick as we can! The try-sail was blown away last time; rig a tarpaulin up instead of it!"

They clung to the No. 6 winch. The noise of the wind on the open deck made speech difficult.

"The stay-sail's about rotted away, sir," shouted the bos'n. "That won't last no time, neither."

"Get it hoisted, anyway! Soon as that's done, we'll have all hands on the for'ard deck to put out a sea-anchor. Tarpaulin over a boom weighed down by a kedge anchor! Understand what I'm saying?"

"I understand. —— help us!"

It seemed to Jimmy as he made his way toward the bridge deck that the boatswain had abandoned hope. He would work, obey orders, but it would be a mere matter of duty; he was convinced already, so Jimmy felt, that there was no hope of saving the *Medea*.

MacGish came out of the starboard alley way that led to his room.

They stared at each other, holding on to the rail.

"This atop of everythin', eh, Jimmy! A-weel, there's nae guid in grumblin'! What are ye gaun to dae?"

The *Medea* was beam on now to the sea, rolling over to starboard and coming slowly back and rolling not quite so far over to port.

"I'm going to fight," said Jimmy. "I'm going to take the —— ship back to Grinton!"

The chief nodded.

"Ye'll be tryin' a jury rudder, eh!"

"Sea anchor first, chief. We'll need the steam on deck."

"Aye. An' ye'll need a' haun's. I'll send the firemen up to help!"

And though, as Jimmy well knew, MacGish was not given to sentiment, he nodded his head again and cleared his throat loudly and said:

"Jimmy, ye desairve to mak' guid on the job, but, man, ye ha'e a tough ficht afore ye!"

DIRECTLY the sails were set and the *Medea's* head had been brought to the wind, Jimmy went forward with Sandy Racken, and Heel, the third engineer, to begin the hardest, most hopeless fight that can fall to the lot of the sailor; a fight that, considered in cold blood, on shore, would have been dismissed as hopeless.

Religion meant very little to Jimmy Kerrill; prayer was the prerogative of the parson; but now, on the forward well-deck of the *Medea*, swept by huge seas, as she dipped her bow, head on for the time being, but for how long no one could tell, he found himself appealing inwardly, despairingly, to whatever Power controlled the sea and the wind and mankind for help.

To ask for a smooth sea and a light breeze and a blue sky, in January in the North Atlantic, with a falling glass, was impossible. This was his subconscious reasoning. Nevertheless, if that Supreme Power—there was a Supreme Power, surely—if that Supreme Power would grant him strength and courage and endurance, and freedom from further accidents, then—then, in return, he would save the *Medea!*

The carpenter, the donkeyman and two of the firemen clung to the No. 2 winch.

"Got that tarpaulin, Chips? Right! We'll have to get that derrick unshipped. The steam's on deck, Mr. Racken, isn't it! Knock the pin out of the goose-neck for a star, Chips!"

He turned and called to the group of men waiting, huddled up under the break of the forecastle head.

"Come on, here, look alive, you!"

As they lowered the boom on the deck between the No. 1 hatch coaming and the starboard bulwarks, partly by hand-hauling, partly by the winch and mast-head tackle, the *Medea*, rolling to starboard, dipped her head into a big sea.

Hannigan's feet were swept from under him; he fell; his right hand was crushed by the sudden roll of the heavy spar. He uttered no sound till they had freed him. When he stood up and looked at his mangled fingers, he cursed.

"Get on aft at once," said Jimmy. "Flotter—" he spoke to the steward who was with them on the forward deck—"take Hannigan aft and dress his hand."

"No," said Hannigan. "Later, not now!"

Jimmy, amazed at the man's courage, said no more.

And although he must have been suffering agony, no one of the crew worked harder than Hannigan. He seemed all at once desperately eager to expose himself to danger. Jimmy remembered how he had spoken to Black John about the wives and children of the crew waiting at home. Hannigan was a mystery.

"We'll have to lower away the starboard anchor a little. Some of you, get on up to the foc'sle head. We're going to pass a wire rope through the hawse-pipe, fish it up over the bulwarks, haul up the slack, bring it back here and fasten it by a bridle on to the derrick. Understand! You, bosun, do you understand?"

On the foc'sle head Jimmy found Hannigan by his side, his face gray and lined with pain, his hand bleeding great dobs of blood on to the deck.

"Go aft, man!" he said.

"Won't!" said Hannigan.

It was Garle who, at the risk of his life, with a line around his waist, dragged the end of the wire rope that had been passed through the hawse-pipe back on to the forecastle head.

Then, on the well-deck once more, they worked to rig the sea-anchor, while the snow drove down on them fiercely and the heavy seas poured over the bows and hurled them, clinging to the wire ropes, against the hatch coaming and the winches, and the wind shrieked in the squalls, and the sky grew darker and darker, as big black clouds came piling up out of the bleak northwest.

Before the sea-anchor was ready, the *Medea* seemed to Jimmy to be paying off from the wind again. The seas were smashing in great showers of foam against the forward port bulwarks.

"Looks like somethin' carried away aft," growled the boatswain.

One of the sailors who had been left on the after well-deck arrived at a run.

"The sails won't last, sir. Stay-sail's tearin' away from the hanks."

"Leave it be!" said Jimmy. "Can't do anything more now. Get on with it, you men! Put some guts into it!"

A bridle of wire rope was attached to the ends of the big forty-six feet long derrick and fastened to the end of the wire rope that had been hauled through the hawse-pipe. To the derrick they lashed a heavy tarpaulin, folded to hang down in the shape of a V and weighed with a kedge anchor, brought forward from the break of the poop.

Darkness had fallen before the sea-anchor was finished.

"All ready now!" Jimmy shouted. "Stand by either end to keep it from taking charge!"

He signaled to the man at the winch.

"Heave away!"

The derrick rose from the deck.

"Hold her!"

A huge wave swept them toward the starboard bulwarks. In the gloom, waist-deep in swirling water, the tired men struggled with the heavy spar. The roll of the ship to port gave them a chance to heave the kedge anchor over the side attached by a long wire rope to the apex of the tarpaulin. The derrick was forced outward by hand, balanced for an instant on the bulwark rail while the wire runner from the mast-head tackle was detached.

"Let her go!" Jimmy yelled. "Stand clear of that —— wire, all of you!"

Another wave sweeping over the port bulwarks, clear over the No. 1 hatch, took the derrick and the tarpaulin and forty fathoms of wire rope over the starboard bulwarks.

"Please Gord she holds!" said the boatswain. "You goin' to put a man on the foc'sle head, sir?"

"No," said Jimmy. "What's the good? If she holds, she holds! We'll know fast enough, if she doesn't! Can't do anything more till daylight, anyway."

But before daylight there was the long January night ahead of them, without a rudder, and the wind rising.

As Jimmy reached the bridge-deck Flotter spoke to him.

"There's a cup of tea, sir, an' some hash, hot! Will you come an' 'ave it?"

"Yes," said Jimmy. "I will." And then he thought of the deck-hands and firemen.

"What about the men? Has the cook got a meal for them, Flotter?"

"Yes, sir; in the galley. Same for all 'ands, sir. Best we could do!"

Hannigan, the last off the forward deck, climbed the ladder slowly, using one hand.

"Flotter," Jimmy said, "go and fetch me a mug of water—hot water. I forgot about Hannigan."

In the steward's pantry he bandaged the man's mangled and broken fingers in rough splints.

Hannigan seemed, in his own tongue-tied way, grateful.

"Thank you, sir."

"Go and get something to eat," said Jimmy. "Hurt much?"

"A little."

"You can't keep your watch, of course. We'll have to see about rigging you up some kind of place to lie up in."

"What for?"

Hannigan glanced at him with a sullen gleam in his eyes.

"I don't think you'll be able to go for'ard to the foc'sle; you or any one else. I am not going to have you sleeping on the engine-room gratings with a hand like that. The others will have to. You can't. D'you understand?"

Hannigan grinned.

"This hand is nothin', sir. Lord! I'm not soft same as most of the lubbers we got aboard, sir. Don't think it! I'll do my work, the same as usual!"

He went out, grumbling to himself.

ALL night long the *Medea* lay head on to heavy seas, rolling and pitching heavily, the engines barely moving.

For Jimmy Kerrill, any thought of sleep was out of the question. Dawn found him, his face caked stiff with frozen spray, wet to the skin, and worn out, but with hope in abundance, staring out with tired eyes over the waste of waters, lead-colored in the gray light of day.

Sometime in the middle watch the sails had carried away, torn to ribbons by the gale; the sea-anchor still held.

MacGish climbed the bridge-ladder.

"It's bad," he said. "This rollin' fair beats the heart oot ye!"

"It's not so bad, Mac, as it was when the *Laronia* sighted us, is it?"

"You're richt! But, ma ——, Jimmy, if it was, dae ye think we wud be here the noo!"

"Wish I could say I didn't think so, but it looks to me, chief, as if it were working up for another blow like the last! Suppose it does, eh? What then?"

"Weel, we maun e'en mak' the best o't!"

He stood by Jimmy's side, gazing over the dodger, smiling grimly to himself.

"Jimmy," he said presently, "God send that thon lass o' yours at hame is prayin' fur ye! But whether or no, I maun gang below an' see that thon scrap o' mine disna carry awa!"

HOUR after hour, throughout the day, the fury of the gale increased. The seas rose higher and higher. The decks were swept continually. The sailors lay huddled up on the engine-room gratings under the tarpaulins that had taken the place of the skylights. There were no meals. The galley was wrecked. The engineers' mess-room was flooded out. The dynamo failed through the smashing of the cylinder cover.

Jimmy, on the broken bridge, with Chayke and the boatswain, who kept their four-hour watches and slept by snatches in the chart-room, wondered whether they would last till night.

He still hoped.

The howling of the wind, the darkness of the sky, the wild gusts of snow, the penetrating, piercing cold, made the day the worst that he could remember. And all the time there was in his heart the growing fear that the sea-anchor would fail them.

EARLY in the morning watch the *Medea* swung beam on to the sea. The wind had fallen, but the seas were running higher than ever.

"Can't do nothin' yet, sir," said the boatswain gloomily. "Wonder to me it lasted long as it did!"

Jimmy nodded his head.

"Don't like it," said the boatswain presently. "She ain't comin' back as well as she ought, she's hangin' longer an' longer when she's rollin'."

"That's nothing," said Jimmy.

But he, too, had noticed, with a tense feeling of fear, that each time the *Medea* rolled there was a longer period of hesitation, sickening and awe inspiring to experience, before she righted herself and rolled in the opposite direction.

"We'll wait till daylight," he said. "That's all!"

They clung, side by side, to the rail of the bridge in the blackness.

"What's it to be the noo?" asked MacGish.

"Jury rudder," said Jimmy. "What else?"

"Aye. Ha'e ye e'er seen yin, Jimmy?"

"No more than I had a sea-anchor, chief!"

"Guid!" Even now MacGish could grin. "Then ye ha'e the advantage o' makin' a stairt wi' no preconceived notions o' what a jury rudder shud be! I'm in the sam' boat as yersel', Jimmy. Onythin' ye wud like me to dae, I'll dae."

They stared at each other in the wild dawn. Neither exactly cared to put his thoughts into words. And then MacGish clucked his tongue.

"Jimmy, ha'e ye e'er heard tell of a jury rudder in a North Atlantic gale bein' of ony actual, practical utility?"

"What about it, chief? Maybe I've not!"

"On a vessel this size, no!" said MacGish. "No!"

AT THE end of a week, a week of terrific rolling, mountainous seas, intense cold, snow storms, and no sun, Jimmy Kerrill came to the conclusion that MacGish was right. Two jury rudders had been constructed, with infinite labor and difficulty; both had failed.

The first, a small derrick towed by wire ropes broadside, attached to two other derricks rigged out athwart the quarters for outriggers, had broken loose, and the wires had fouled the propeller. Two days of helpless drifting, beam on to the heavy sea, had gone by before the propeller had been cleared of the tangle.

The second rudder had been constructed of the Suez Canal rudder, fastened to the end of one of the big after derricks, weighed with chain spans. Two turns of a wire rope had been passed around the barrel of the after winch and the two ends taken aft through the blocks on the ends of the outriggers and fastened to the rudder end of the derrick that lay on the poop ready to be launched. This derrick had been lashed to the quadrant by ropes, with sufficient freedom to permit of its moving, and launched over the stern, and steered by the steam winch on the after deck.

A few hours later Jimmy had discovered that the jury rudder was useless. The weather was growing worse once more. One of the wires attached to the head of the rudder had snapped; and when in the morning the derrick was hauled aboard the Suez Canal rudder had gone.

MacGish suggested that they should construct a rudder blade from two engine-room plates, and next morning, after a breakfast of weak tea and biscuit, he and Sandy Racken were on the poop bolting the two plates on opposite sides of the derrick. Pieces of board, the same length as the width of the plates, placed on top of each other, so that their combined thickness equalled the diameter of the spar, were fixed firmly between the plates at either end and bolted.

The steering-chains were unshackled from the quadrant, passed through the leads and secured to the tiller end of the derrick. The rudder end was attached once more to the three-inch wire ropes through the blocks on the outriggers and so to the after winch.

Jimmy, intent on getting the rudder successfully launched, had turned to give the signal to the winch man to heave away, when the *Medea* rolled over to port, far over, the poop sank as the bow rose; he paused; some one yelled a warning; and he made a grab at the quadrant as a huge mass of water rose high up and came sliding down on top of the poop and the after deck.

Once again, as when Black John had been crippled and the mate killed, Jimmy had the same stifling sensation of being crushed, and he felt in a flash of agony, Grinton's triumph uppermost in his mind, that he and every one with him would be washed away. Then the poop tilted once more, over to starboard, and rose; the huge wave had passed; he scrambled to his feet and found that Radby, the little apprentice, had vanished over the side and that Heel, the third engineer, had broken his arm.

When the jury rudder was launched and the third's arm set, Jimmy went back to the bridge, feeling depressed and sad and a little less hopeful than at any time during the nine days that they had been drifting without a rudder.

Before midnight he realized with a sinking heart that this third jury rudder was also useless. So tremendous were the seas that swept over the after well-deck that it became impossible for the men to man the winch. Nor would the *Medea* answer her helm, but swung helplessly broadside on once more.

"It's waur nor I've seen," said MacGish wearily in the chart-room. "It canna last fur e'er, onyway. The question is, can we haud oot?"

That MacGish himself seemed to have lost heart gave Jimmy a sudden shock.

"Why, chief," he said, "of course we'll hold out! Of course we will. We're going to fight to the last kick!"

"What wull it be, Jimmy? Anither jury rudder!"

"Yes, chief."

"Mebbe the yin we ha'e ower the stern the noo micht act if we boltit anither twa plates on't!"

"We can try, Mac. But I don't know what we can do till this sea goes down. We'll haul her in as soon as it's daylight. My ——, Mac, you wouldn't have thought the weather would have been bad all this time, would you?"

"I ken fine that thocht's no' of muckle avail on the Western Ocean this time o' year! Mebbe oor best chance, efter a', is to fa' in wi' anither ship!"

Jimmy sighed.

"I'd hate like —— if they had to take us off, chief! I'm not a fool, though. Think of old Grinton! He's praying now, I bet, that the ship sinks! Lives of the crew! ——! what's he care for the likes of us? My ——, chief, I'd give almost anything on earth to have him aboard tonight! It 'd kill him. The flabby old skunk! He'd learn something, wouldn't he! I'm learning, too. I'm learning more than I thought I'd learn. The men, for instance! Aren't they wonderful? Look at 'em now, Mac! No food! Nothing dry to put on! Nowhere to sleep, but the engine-room gratings, and God knows, chief, that's not much better now than sleeping on one of the hatches! And yet, there's not been a kick from one of 'em since the rudder went! Why? It beats me, chief! I can't make it out."

"They ken fine there's no guid to be gained by kickin'. But wait, ma mannie, till they think there's a chance o' makin' life mees'rable fur you, wait till ye're pattin' yersel' on the back an' sayin' they ocht to be happy an' contentit! They'll sort ye! I ken fine they will!"

"There's always Hannigan, of course," said Jimmy. "The old man gave Hannigan a licking in Halifax. Hannigan tried to do him in when we were in New York. I licked him for it. He's had it in for me ever since, I know. I've seen him look at me, as much as to give me warning, if he ever got me alone, he'd knife me and think no more of it than killing a rat! Well, what's he going to do? Chief, why hasn't he tipped me over the side, eh?"

"God kens!" said MacGish. He stood, holding on to the edge of the chart-room table. "Man, the auld coo's rollin' waur nor e'er! Wud ye believe it!"

Jimmy's hand closed on the handle of the door. He paused.

"Chief," he said, "I wish Black John was with us."

"Mebbe he is," said MacGish, glancing quickly around the dark little chart-room, lit by a dim electric light. "Mebbe he is. What way is it we're still afloat, Jimmy? By all the laws o' hydrostatics an' dynamics an' Board o' Trade requirements fur the stability o' steamships an' sae on, we ocht to be at the bottom the noo! But we're still afloat! By ——, Jimmy, if we can last oot as lang as we ha'e lastit, onythin' under the face o' heaven is posseeble!"

And Jimmy nodded. "Anything's possible!"

FAR to the southward, on the starboard bow, the mast-head lights of a steamer showed through the rain.

"There!" said Chayke. "D'you see her, sir?"

"Yes," said Jimmy presently. "I see her. Bosun, got those rockets?"

"Aye, sir. They're here."

A rocket soared up into the blackness, casting a brilliant light on the faces of the men, huddled on the lee side of the lower bridge, and the foam-swept decks, and the wreckage of davits and boats and steam-pipes.

"Give 'em another, bosun!"

Rocket after rocket was fired; but no answer came from the other ship.

"Give 'em some blue lights," said Jimmy.

The men, hopeful at first, growled.

"What's the matter with 'em? Asleep?"

"'Blast 'em! Another ruddy passenger ship!"

The *Medea* rolled on through the heavy seas, rudderless, with one sail set, a tarpaulin.

A fierce squall of driving rain and sleet came tearing down and blotted the other steamer's lights from view.

When the squall had passed the lights had gone.

"Wonder if she's sunk!" said Chayke.

JIMMY KERRILL, leaning over the rail of the bridge, biting his lips to keep himself from dropping asleep, peering with tired eyes into the night, fancied that he saw ahead of him, faintly at first, then more clearly, the face of the girl who had wished him luck—Eileen Mavison—Grinton's step-daughter.

He smiled grimly. Common sense told him that he was suffering from a delusion, brought on by fatigue and hunger and lack of sleep.

Eileen Mavison. A nice enough girl, of course. A good sort. Square, honest, kind-hearted. But—Grinton's step-daughter, living in luxury on the profits of running tramp steamers.

If the *Medea* sank, he reflected, Eileen Mavison would have more money to spend.

Eileen was looking at him as if she meant him to understand that it was no fault of hers and that she was sorry.

Perhaps, if she had struggled hard enough, she would go. He repeated scraps of the multiplication table.

"Twice one is two—are two, surely! Twice two is four—are four. Twice two—too easy!" He began again. "Fifteen times seventeen are—too —— hard! Nine times twenty-one are a hundred and eighty-one: nine times twenty-two are a hundred and ninety——"

——! He could see her as distinctly as ever; and yet Eileen was at home, in Cardiff. How could she be aboard the *Medea*, one of her step-father's coffin ships, drifting about the North Atlantic, fourteen days without a rudder, in bad weather? He could feel, even while he looked at the girl's smiling, tender face, the slow rolling of the ship and the groaning of the hull as the seas pounded on the iron decks, and the south-west wind on his cheek and the sting of the rain.

He wondered, then, if he were going out of his mind.

He leaned far out over the wing of the bridge. The cold spray drenched him once more.

Clong-clong, clong-clong.

Faintly he heard the wheel-house bell. There was no man at the wheel, but a watch was kept on the bridge. That afternoon the fifth jury rudder had been launched over the stern. Chayke was on the after deck with the men at the winch, trying to keep the ship's head on an easterly course, and apparently failing.

Jimmy heard footsteps. He did not move. It seemed, in some extraordinary way, that he was talking.

"Eileen!" He heard his own voice. But that was absurd! What the —— was the matter, anyway? Good ——! he was going crazy!

"Here, what's up?"

A hand grasped his arm and dragged him away from the wing of the bridge.

He turned his head, and by the light of the moon, shining for a moment through a break in the scudding clouds, he saw Hannigan. A sudden desperate fear swept over him. He struggled to free himself. Hannigan held him fast.

"Get out! Leave me alone!" said Jimmy thickly. "What are you doing here?"

"Just come up to stand my watch an' heard you talkin', sir, an' then you tried to climb over the rail! Anythin' wrong?"

"No, there's nothing wrong! Nothing!"

All at once Jimmy knew that he must talk; either that, or he would fall asleep where he stood.

Hannigan was in the wheel-house, the light of the binnacle reflected on his grim, hard-lipped face, with the small, close-set eyes, that revealed his character so completely; the eyes of an animal, an ill-natured animal, waiting a chance to pounce.

And yet Hannigan was a brave man. He was capable. He knew his work. Only a brave man would have endured the agony of those crushed and broken fingers without a murmur.

"Hannigan," said Jimmy, "what are you thinking about?"

Hannigan never took his gaze from the binnacle.

"I was thinkin', sir, about that scrap we had in New York an' wonderin' why it was I didn't bear you no malice for the lickin' you gave me." His features twisted into a grin. "You beat me proper. Mebbe that's why I ain't aimin' to risk it again. You hit too hard. All the same, sir, if I'd been your age I'd ha' killed you. If you hadn't been quick on your feet, I'd ha' killed you, anyway. I couldn't grip yer."

"You'd have killed Captain Dorrock!"

"Aye," said the man and he raised his eyes and stared out into the night. "Aye, I would. I'd ha' swung for him willing. I'm not blamin' you, mister, only you don't understand the rights an' the wrongs of the case!"

"No," said Jimmy. "Maybe I don't. All I know is if I hadn't come up when I did you'd have laid out a better man than yourself."

For a time Hannigan said nothing. Then his features twisted into a grin.

"At his job, a better man than myself! Yes, sir! He said I'd sailed with him before, didn't he? I had. Yes, there's a heap o' things in every man's life he wants to forget. I was one o' the things in Black John Dorrock's life. He didn't want to remember, o' course. But he did, in the end. He had to. He treated me bad, he knew it. We were enemies twenty odd years back, enemies to the day he died. I got more cause to hate Black John almost than any man that I ever met—more even than the man who had me shanghaied aboard the *Medea* at Cardiff! Him, I'll get, anyway. An' Black John's gone, so what's the odds? Looks like we're goin', too. I'd ha' liked to have got back to Cardiff, mister!"

"Well, you will!" said Jimmy.

"Will I?" said Hannigan. "Not the way we're headed, I won't. We've been criss-crossin' our track for fourteen days now: driftin' around like the flyin' Dutchman!"

"What d'you know of the flying Dutchman?" Jimmy asked.

Hannigan chuckled.

"Know as little as most fellers who've listened to yarns an' read a bit. Ain't true, o' course, but there's heaps o' things you wouldn't believe true, if you didn't know, an' yet are! Dunno, but it seems to me, mister, in a way o' speakin', the more you travel aroun' an' the longer you live, the more you're ready to believe anythin'! Who'd have thought, f'rinstance, that I'd be sailin' with Black John Dorrock again! At my age! No, sir; me an' Black John was shipmates twenty-two year ago. I was an A.B., Black John was bosun! I was younger'n him. He had his second mate's ticket; he'd been an officer, they used to say, but he'd lost his job for somethin' or other an' signed on as bosun.

"Him an' me an' two, three others in the foc'sle, aye, an' one in the cabin, too, went into a deal together that was ag'in' the law, but winked at. See! That's to say, there's heaps of men goin' around now, church-goin', hymn-singin' sons o' guns that hold their heads up, what got their money same as we wanted! Only, with us, things went wrong. See! It ain't worth makin' a song an' dance about, but it was pearls. Place we were in, a schooner come in; we knew there was pearls aboard. See! We planned to have 'em. We did. See! Some of 'em. We was clever, but we wasn't clever enough. We laid two o' the schooner's people out in the scrap; but nothin' to hurt; they followed us.

"First thing we knew there was —— to pay! I was the only one of the crowd that got pinched. See! Artful, eh! I was the —— goat, sir! I got five years in one o' them stinkin' Dutch prisons out there! Black John gave me away, without turn'n' a hair! Dunno, mebbe he bought off the police! Mebbe, he stood in with the old man! There was bound to be some one nabbed; an' they put it on me. The pearls was found in my locker; some o' them! An' that's why I had it in for Black John!"

For a time there was silence in the wheelhouse.

Then Hannigan went on.

"Black John didn't gain nothin', o' course. Except that he didn't go through the hoop. But, me!" Hannigan laughed. "Time we was runnin' away from that schooner, through the long grass, I planted some o' the pearls in a tobacco pouch in the roots of a tree. I got 'em after I come out o' prison. That's how I managed to buy that there little place o' mine in Cardiff. An', though I kept my eyes open, more or less, I kind o' lost interest in Black John from that day to the day I come aboard ship at Cardiff, doped. I daresay I could ha' found him, if I'd been desperate, but I'd had the pearls an' business was good, an' I didn't worry. An' then he kicked me off the bridge that day. See! Well, what's the odds, same as I said?"

THE strain was beginning to tell. After sixteen days of drifting, a strange lassitude seemed to have gripped the sailors and firemen of the *Medea*. They knew that the end was at hand; and the end when it came would be better than drifting helplessly through the Western Ocean. The endless toil of putting out jury rudders only to find them either useless in keeping the ship on her course or to see them smashed by the seas had robbed them of hope. Red-eyed, gaunt, famished for want of food, their limbs aching through continuous wearing of drenched garments, their faces and hands covered with sores, they neither talked very much nor laughed. Worse, from Jimmy Kerrill's point of view, they no longer quarreled.

Jimmy, outwardly, at least, maintaining that they would win through, was amazed at their courage. In port and in fair weather, they had been to him objects of scorn and contempt and rage. Now, in a succession of gales that would have tried the strength of any steamer, much more a leaking, rudderless tramp, they neither grumbled, nor shirked their work, but toiled willingly, almost, it seemed, cheerfully.

A brief glimpse of the sun at noon gave Jimmy the ship's position.

The chief came to the chart-room once more.

"Here!" said Jimmy. He put his pencil on the chart. "This is where we are."

MacGish nodded.

"Aye, we've drifted!"

"There's always the chance of falling in with some one homeward bound from the Azores!" said Jimmy. "Or South America!"

"Aye," said MacGish, "there's aye the chance." He cleared his throat. "Jimmy, ye'll be thinkin' I ne'er visit ye, wi'oot bein' the bearer o' ill news! We'll ha'e to be carefu': we're rinnin' short o' coal; an' of ile, as weel!"

Jimmy stared out of the port.

"The cook reports the pump's run dry; no fresh water left in the tank!"

"Talkin' aboot water," said MacGish, "there's water seepin' in frae God kens whaur! It's a' we can dae to keep it frae gainin' on us!"

He rose to his feet and stretched out his arms to yawn, and then as the *Medea* gave a sudden, unexpected roll, slid across the floor and clung to Jimmy.

"Ma ——, Jimmy! If we e'er dae mak' it, think o' what auld snake-belly wull luk like an' feel like! In front o' the crood to welcome us, ye'll hear him ca' ye his white-haired boy, but, dod, to yer ain face, when he gets ye into his wee office, he winna waste worruds; it wull be you fur the beach, James, an' dinna furgit it! Ye'll ha'e ruined him!"

"The rotten part of it is," said Jimmy, "if we go, after all we've done, he pockets his blood money!"

"Aye, an' endoo's a kirk, or a hame fur orphans! A-weel, I maun gang. Man, I'd dee happy, if I cud ken fur certain that ye'd bring the *Medea* back to Cardiff!"

"We wouldn't have come as far as we have, but for you, chief!" said Jimmy. "You're the man!"

"Losh!" said MacGish, and he rubbed his nose shiny with a piece of waste. "That I shud ha'e lived to hear ony master acknowledgin' that the chief engineer did owt but encumber the face o' the airth! But—ye're wrang fur yince, James; what credit there is, is yours!"

He was pleased, none the less.

A NIGHT once more. The thirty-ninth night of the voyage and the blackest.

Twenty days had gone by since the rudder had smashed, and the *Medea* still floated, a little lower in the water, a little more down by the stern, still rolling in the same old persistent way, but with even less life and buoyancy than had seemed at first possible.

Jimmy and the boatswain talked together on the broken bridge.

"We'll keep on driftin', I suppose, sir, till we turn turtle an' sink! What's the good of it?"

Jimmy glanced at him coldly. The boatswain was getting old.

"We've got to stick it," he said. "Don't you see we've got to take the *Medea* home! We must!"

From the lower bridge there came a thin, high-pitched laugh.

"I'm scared. I can't stand much more of it!"

Jimmy frowned. Garle, of course.

"You've got to stand it!" said some one else.

"I can't. I've done wrong in my time, and I'm scared. I'm a sinner. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"You stop it, Garle!" said the other voice. "Stop it, or I'll boot you off the —— ship! What's the good o' yer givin' us yer —— prayers?"

Another voice, Hannigan's, broke in.

"Leave him be. Most like we'll be gone by mornin'! If it helps him to spout them prayers o' his, let him!"

A wave roared over the port rail and flung itself against the broken bridge, scarlet in the light of the side lamp. The *Medea* rolled over to starboard, rolled very slowly and deliberately, kept on rolling, hung poised, her starboard scuppers under, and then, after a breathless moment, very wearily, it seemed, as if disinclined to fight a losing battle, came rolling back again.

"My ——!" said the boatswain. "Another o' those, sir, an' we'll go!"

"We're all right," said Jimmy. He had to fight to steady his voice. "Nothing to worry about. Nothing."

XIV

AT ABOUT the same moment that the estimable Mr. Grinton was drinking his second cup of coffee at breakfast and calculating once again the profits that he would make from the insurance money on the *Medea*, now certain to be withdrawn from the reinsurance market and thus definitely regarded by the underwriters as lost, the captain and mate of the tramp steamer, *Jabalpur*, were staring into the southwest, waiting for the dawn.

"There!" said the captain. "There! Look it!"

A rocket had soared into the darkness.

"Some one havin' a bad time, eh! Mister, answer their signal. Fire a rocket to show we've seen 'em!" He went to the wheelhouse and changed the course.

The sun rose, hidden by masses of gray cloud, and across the long slopes and hollows of the heavy Atalntic swell they watched a steamer, low in the water, with a list to starboard, rolling and shipping great seas.

"Seems that feller's in a bad way," said the mate. "No life in him." He drew in his breath sharply. "See that roll!"

"My ——!" The captain, a little, square-shouldered man with a black beard and bright eyes, lowered his binoculars and looked at the mate. "Mister, that funnel! Look it! See! Ain't that the *Medea?* Why, my ——! She must ha' left New York thirty, forty—aye, forty days ago! The *Laronia* spoke her about a month back: remember? Then —" He screwed up his eyes and showed his teeth under his black mustache and laughed:

"Then, mister, this here looks like pickin's, eh!"

Later, as the daylight strengthened, and the two ships drew nearer, doubts vanished.

"Mister," said the captain, "that's the *Medea:* I bet you a golden quid! She belongs to old scum-face Grinton; I was second mate on one of his packets years ago, but never again; a mean old shark, the kind that 'd cut the fingers off a corpse an' sell the rings to a Bute Street pawnbroker! He'll pay for this, though! Salvage, mister! Salvage, by ——! Mister, you stir yourself now an' get the hands busy with them wire hawsers!" He laughed. "There's towin' ahead!"

FROM the bridge of the *Medea* Jimmy Kerrill watched the approach of the strange steamer. He felt neither excitement nor relief nor thankfulness. He was tired and he had room for no further emotion. He wondered, after a while, why they had had to wait so long for help.

The dawning was very cold. He shivered. His clothes were wet still, wet and torn; his sea boots, new in New York, showed great gaps between the soles and uppers. He stared at the group of deckhands and firemen standing on the bridge-deck near the fiddley.

Was there a more miserable, wretched life than theirs? He puzzled over the answer.

He let his gaze wander around, at the waste of waters, great surging slopes of green that lifted the *Medea* high up or sent her reeling, rolling, down into great combs or hollows, mountains of water, ranges of hills, like the downs of his own south country, less fierce now, perhaps, than at any time since Black John's death, but terrible enough and capable of pounding into nothingness any ship, carelessly handled, inefficiently manned, or unfortunate, as the *Medea* was unfortunate.

And yet, was the *Medea* unfortunate?

From where Jimmy stood on the bridge, his eyes took in at a sweeping glance, the wrecked decks, the twisted davits wrenched from their sockets, the salt-encrusted funnel, the gap where the port wing of the bridge had been, and he thought of the boats that had been washed away, and the ventilators that had gone with them, and the engine-room skylights, carried away by the same sea that had brought death to Lappett and Trelattick and Black John Dorrock himself. He felt, perhaps, that the *Medea* was not so unfortunate, after all.

"Look!" said the boatswain suddenly. "What the ——'s up! Look at 'em!"

And then Jimmy Kerrill came to himself. On the ladder, gazing up at him and on the lower bridge, he saw the deck hands and firemen.

"Sir!"

A fireman, his pale face, smeared with coal-dust, gaunt and unshaven, his bare flesh showing through his torn shirt, had halted half-way up the ladder.

"Well, what do *you* want?"

"'Ere," said the fireman, "it's no good you talkin' like that!"

"Oh!" said Jimmy. "Isn't it?" Any feeling of sympathy he had had for the crew went. After all these weeks of suffering, now that help was in sight, they were going to make things difficult. "I tell you one good thing I can do," he growled, "and that is to kick you off that ladder. Get off it!" He raised his voice. "Sharp!"

The fireman hesitated.

"Go on, Bob!" said one of the other firemen. "Knock his lights out!"

Calmly, without heat, but very swiftly, Jimmy hit the man nearest him on the point of the jaw. The old law of the Western Ocean, hit first, listen to explanations afterward, was a good-enough law to follow. The fireman slid down the ladder.

As he struggled to his feet, the little carpenter kicked his legs from under him and fell on him.

"Lay still, or I'll croak you!"

"That 'll do, Chips!" said Jimmy. He glared at the hands. "If any one wants any more, they can —— well have it! An' when you get home, if you're not satisfied with the treatment you've had on the voyage, you can go straight to the nearest shipping office, or magistrate, or police station, or the secretary of your blasted union, and report me, and be —— to you! If there was any use doing it, I'd log the whole —— crowd of you! I'm not going to be dictated to or jawed at by a bunch of toughs like you!"

The men stared at him in sullen silence.

"And now," said Jimmy, "perhaps one of you sea-lawyers will tell me exactly what in —— you want here?"

"Beg yer pardon, sir!" Larch was speaking. "This yere steamer what's comin': we done all that mortal men can do, as the sayin' goes, sir, an' we want them to take us aboard!"

"Then," said Jimmy, "by ——, you've come to the wrong shop! Who the —— are you, you mis'rable little toad! You want them to take you aboard! What for?"

They did not answer him.

"You want to abandon the *Medea!* Now! What for? Are you scared—or what?"

"Scared!" Another of the deck-hands, Bearmer, a West Countryman, burst out at him. "No us ain't scared, but we'm got wives an' children at home, us 'd rather be taken off, than risk not seein' they no more!"

"Aye! that's it. 'E's right!"

"If we stay here, sir, mebbe, the old ship will sink under us; she's sinkin' now!"

"We can't last out no more o' this like o' weather, sir!"

"D'you suppose I'm going to abandon my ship," said Jimmy bitterly, "when help's coming up! That steamer there will look after us. Don't you worry your heads about that! For her own sake, as well as yours! Suppose she won't risk the lives of her crew by putting her boats out, eh! Looks like she wouldn't, with this sea running! What are you going to do, then? Complain to your —— union, eh! She'll tow us in, of course; an' don't think it's because of you, either, it's not, it's on account of the salvage! Understand? The salvage! You—why, you're a —— sight safer off where you are, aboard the *Medea*, than messing around in open boats this weather! You ought to be —— well ashamed of yourselves! You've brought the ship as far as this, forty days out, twenty-one days drifting without a rudder, and now—for no reason at all, except you're tired—you want to quit! I'm —— if I don't think you're worse'n a pack of coolies! Get off the lower bridge, the whole —— crowd of you!"

Out of breath, he stood and glared down at them, swaying to and fro to the *Medea's* rolling.

"That's all very well, sir," said a trimmer, "but down in the stokehole it ain't fit for human bein's: we've 'ad enough of it!"

"Aw, shut up!" To his surprize, Jimmy saw Hannigan, his injured hand still in bandages, shoulder the trimmer back. "Told yer what would happen if you came chewin' the rag here. Get back!"

"You want yer ugly red mug pushed in!" said the trimmer. "You were the first last time to holler yer wanted to be taken aboard the *Laronia* an' now——"

Another fireman ran at him and grappled him round the neck.

"I'll settle 'em," said the boatswain.

He put his foot on the ladder. Jimmy caught hold of his arm.

"Wait!"

Sandy Racken, the second engineer, arrived on the lower bridge, bare-headed, swinging a heavy spanner.

"What the —— are you playin' at? Get on back to the stoke-hold this instant! You, Barson, you black-faced ape! Minchen, —— you! Stop it, or I'll give you a wipe in the mug that 'll teach you wisdom! Get back to your work!"

The men hesitated and then scattered.

Jimmy wiped the sweat from his forehead and laughed.

"Scum, ain't they!" said the boatswain.

"When in all your born days," said Sandy, "did you ever see the like o' that? Scum! Yes. I told 'em, friendly-like, there was help comin' at last; they'd done good work, I was very pleased with them! An' so on. The next time I put my head into the stokehole, it was empty. I'm —— if they hadn't lit out the moment my back was turned, an' to —— with the firin'! I'll teach 'em!"

He swung his spanner.

"They're signalin', sir!" said Chayke. "C. S. Do you require any assistance?" He laughed. "Do we?"

"So long, Sandy! See you later!" said Jimmy. "Maybe we'll have that drink of ours, after all!"

He turned to Chayke. "Toby, get that code book out of the chart-room."

A few minutes later the four fluttering flags on the foremast told them that the strange steamer was the *Jabalpur*, of Newcastle.

The chief engineer appeared on the bridge deck. Jimmy beckoned to him and he climbed to the bridge.

"The *Jabalpur!*" he said. "Aye, I ken the *Pur* boats fine! The *Kolhapur, Nagpur, Bahawalpur, Jaipur!*"

The semaphore on the *Jabalpur's* bridge began to signal.

Jimmy, the binoculars to his eyes, gave a sudden yelp of astonishment.

"Chief, what d'you think? They're bound for Cardiff, same as ourselves; they'll tow us into the Bristol Channel, if we like!"

"Man, wud ye believe it!" said MacGish. "Then it's no' Queenstown or Falmouth fur us!"

Jimmy continued to read.

"Stand by to pick up a line! Good!"

* * *

THE *Jabalpur* circled round to windward and cast over the side a life-buoy to which lines were attached.

Slowly the life-buoy drifted across the intervening space of sea.

Jimmy, waiting impatiently on the bridge of the *Medea*, rang the telegraph to Slow Ahead and then, at a warning hail from the poop, to Stop.

"How's that?" he shouted, looking aft. "Will that do?"

A yell from the after deck answered him.

"All right, sir, we've got it!"

He watched the deck-hands bearing the life-buoy with its burden of lines forward, passing it from man to man carefully, outside the boat-deck supports and the rigging of the foremast, to the foc'sle head.

Then he rang the telegraph to Slow Ahead, told Chayke to take the bridge, and went forward to help get the towing-ropes aboard and shackled to the *Medea's* cable.

It was not till three bells in the afternoon watch that the ropes were made fast. The *Jabalpur* moved slowly ahead; the *Medea* followed. The deck-hands raised a feeble cheer. The long tow home had begun.

Late in the evening, after an unappetizing meal of canned herrings and hard biscuit and lukewarm tea that tasted of grease and engine oil, the chief engineer came to the chart-room.

Jimmy rested his dividers on a pencil-mark on the chart over which he was bending.

"Want to see where we were at noon, chief?" he asked.

"Sae ye got a sicht o' the sun, did ye?"

"Forty-eight, ten, north: eighteen, twenty-five, west."

The chief took his empty pipe from his mouth.

"Weel, I wudna ha'e believt it!" He studied the chart in silence. "A lang way frae hame yet, Jimmy. But it luks like daylicht at last! Dod, I'm wearit! I maun get some sleep the nicht, onyway!"

"Did Sandy tell you about the turn up he had with the firemen this morning?"

"Aye, he tellt me!"

"Queer, wasn't it! As good a crowd as you'd want with you in a pinch! There isn't a man who didn't get knocked out, one time or another, by those —— rudders of ours! Hannigan, now; if I'd had fingers like his—did you ever see them, chief?—if I'd had fingers like his, I'd have croaked! But however bad things were going, that gang of ours stuck to their work, with nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep, and without a grumble; yet now, just when we're seeing daylight, same as you said, chief, they start yapping! Came to the bridge here and said they wanted to be taken off! What do you make of it, eh?"

"What dae I mak' o't!" said MacGish. He wrinkled his eyes and looked at Jimmy with his head on one side. "Weel, it's the auld story! What fur dae hauf the shipowners o' Great Britain ha'e foreign crews; niggers or coolies or lascars? Because, Jimmy, they're easy to haun'tle. In port, they'll no' get drunk an' start fichtin' a' ower the water-front! They cost less! They'll no' raise —— if ye esk fur a wee bit ower time! But, when things gang wrang an' ye're wunnerin' when ye'll be makin' the acquaintance o' Davey Jones, luk oot! They'll let ye doon wi' a bang! An' that's whaur a crew o' heathen like we got aboard the *Medea*, the scum o' Cardiff, the rakin's o' hauf the prisons in Great Britain—you've only to luk at them to ken that muckle—oot on yin o' their brief spells o' liberty; that's whaur a gang like we signed on fur the voyage, Jimmy, wull score over the coolies! When things are at their vera worst, they'll worruk till they drap! But by ——, let them sae muckle as think there's hope of an easier time in sicht, the —— English wull ha'e ye! They'll dodge an' they'll malinger an' mak' life —— fur ye!

"When ony yin talks to me aboot seafarin' men an' esks me to consider their jist grievances an' judge them frae ordinair' every-day standards o' civilization, I jist up an' tell them: 'Awa' wi' ye an' bile yer heids; ye dinna ken what ye're talkin' aboot!' An' if they'd esk me fur explanations, why I'd tak' as an instance this morn'; the crood demandin' as a richt that their captain shud abandon his ship an' signal anither ship to tak them aboard! Tak' it frae me, Jim, gaun to sea is no bed o' roses, the noo; but you wait an' see what like o' game it is in ten years' time!"

Jimmy grinned. MacGish's theories, though by no means new, amused him.

"If we had been on ony rin but the North Atlantic, Jimmy," MacGish continued, "we'd ha'e had a coolie or lascar crew, ye may pit yer last penny on that. An' if we had, neither you nor me wud be here the nicht. The *Medea* wud ha'e sunk an' auld Grinton wud ha'e driven the wolf frae the door an' feathered his nest an' been free o' worry fur a year or twa!" MacGish laughed dryly. "Man, I wud gi'e a month's pay to ha'e seen thon auld viper's face when he learnt that the *Medea* is reported safe! If he disna ken yet, he wull the morn's morn' when he reads the papers!"

"And on top of the insurance he'll lose," said Jimmy, "there'll be salvage to pay to the *Jabalpur*!"

"Aye, an' atop o' that there's a dummy cargo that he's carrit across the Atlantic!"

After MacGish had gone Jimmy stood for a while on the bridge, staring into the darkness, over the dodger.

The night was cold and fresh; quick-moving clouds hid the moon; great white masses of foam washed over the decks; ahead he could catch glimpses of the stern light of the *Jabalpur*, towing them home; the wind moaned and whined in the funnel stays.

He spoke to the boatswain, beside him, on the bridge.

"Wind's freshening up a bit! Norwest again."

The boatswain grunted.

"We'll be lucky if we get through without no more trouble, sir! It ain't goin' to be easy towin'. No, sir!"

"Bosun, you give me the hump! Why don't you try smiling?"

Again the boatswain grunted.

"Who've you got on the focsle head?" Jimmy asked.

"Hannigan, sir."

"Right— I'm going for'ard to have a look at the tow ropes!"

As Jimmy reached the ladder that led to the foc'sle head, he heard Garle's voice, raised in anger.

"What I'd like to know is why you've made a dead set at me from the first!"

"Who made a set at yer?" said Hannigan. "Not me. Get off o' here, you little louse, or you'll be cheatin' the blokes in the hospital dissectin'-room yet!"

Jimmy stood, holding on to the hand-rail of the ladder, gazing at the *Jabalpur*. The *Medca*, rolling still, the wind and sea on her beam, was making headway, at last. A few days more and they would be at home.

Hannigan and Garle, clinging to the windlass, argued.

"You were the man that knocked me out that night, anyway! Think I don't know, Hannigan! Why did you do it?"

Jimmy frowned and, though curious for Hannigan's answer, stamped his foot on the wooden deck by way of warning.

Neither of the men heard him.

"I knocked you out, did I! Well, well!"

A sea, flung high up over the port bow, swept over the foc'sle head and the two voices were silenced.

"I knocked you out, did I!" Hannigan continued. "What if I did! Didn't you deserve it! It was you, you interferin' little sweep, what give me that message at Cardiff!"

"The woman asked me to, didn't she?" said Garle. "How'd I know it was all a plant! An', anyway, I'd nothing to do with doping you! I helped you aboard, yes! Of course I did. They told me, the two girls did, that the man who'd signed on had paid you to make the trip in his place, and you were drunk! And for that, Hannigan, you knocked me out, when I wasn't looking! Well, I tell you this, you wouldn't dare try any of those —— tricks on me now! Would you, or wouldn't you?"

And this was Garle! Jimmy smiled at the tone of his voice. He made a move forward, unwilling to listen, then, as Hannigan went on, he waited.

"Changed yer tune, Garle, ain't you? What's become o' the prayers?"

"How do you know it isn't owing to the prayers we're here?"

"Garle," said Hannigan, "you're one of the whimperin', cry-fer-yer-mammy kind! When you thought you were goin' to croak, you plumped yourself down on yer knees an' prayed! What for? To be allowed to live! I bet I done more wickedness in one year than you ever done in your life! If you'd got the sins on your conscience I got on mine, you'd be scared stiff! But I be —— if just because I thought I was goin' to croak I'd try an' dodge myself out o' payin' the price! I'd take my medicine. You, you wouldn't! You'll go your own way up to the last, an' then when you think you're dyin', you'll say your prayers an' beg for forgiveness an' walk right in an' claim a front seat along o' the Missions an' Seamen's Homes an' Sky-Pilots an' Sons of Glory! You're a white-livered little rat, anyway. Hold tight!"

The *Medea* rolled to port. A mass of foam poured over the port bow.

When next he spoke, Garle, it was plain, bore no malice. He laughed.

" I was scared. But I'm not scared now, Hannigan. After this, I'll never be scared again. I've seen too much since we left New York to care. You're stronger than I am, aren't you, Hannigan? Next time, though, you're thinking of trying any of your sailors' boarding-house tricks on me, look out! See what happens! I'm warning you! Are you scared, Hannigan?"

Jimmy felt that Garle's outburst was perhaps more amazing than any of the amazing things that had come to his notice aboard the *Medea*.

"That'll do," he said. He moved across to the windlass.

"Beg pardon, sir," said Garle.

He slid quietly past in the darkness and disappeared down the ladder.

"Pretty wet up here, Hannigan!" said Jimmy as a shower of cold spray dashed over them. "Everything all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"If it gets too bad you'd better shift!"

"If it gets as bad as that, sir, there won't be no need to stop!"

Jimmy staggered aft along the flooded well-deck to the chart-room, kicked off his wet boots, rolled himself in a blanket on the settee and dropped into a sound sleep.

He woke to find the boatswain leaning over him, shaking him.

"Sir! Mr. Kerrill! Wake up! The cables have parted; we're adrift!"

Jimmy flung off his blanket.

"Curse!" He pulled on his boots. "All right, bosun!" A lurch of the ship threw him forward. "Blowing again!"

"Yes, sir," said the bos'n. "Told you it would, sir. I was goin' to call you anyway, when the ropes broke!"

Out on the bridge, Jimmy stared into the black night. Ahead, on the starboard bow, he could see the lights of the *Jabalpur* He reached up and tugged the whistle-cord. When the sound of the blaring screech had died away, he pulled the cord again.

"Mabbe they won't hear that, sir!" said the boatswain.

Jimmy nodded. He took his electric torch from his inner pocket and began to flash a signal to the *Jabalpur*.

DAWN was breaking.

From the *Jabalpur's* bridge, they could make out the dim form of the *Medea*, rolling helplessly, wallowing in the trough.

The captain of the *Jabalpur* was worried.

"Them poor ——!" He clucked his tongue and pulled at his beard. "—— it! it's tough, ain't it, mister?"

"Yes," said the mate, "yes, sir, it's tough."

"She can't stand much more of it, mister; she's got a list that just about frightens you!"

"An' what could we do, if we seen her sink! All last night I was scared that we'd lose her lights, and that if they went, it 'd mean she was gone!"

"Glass worries me," said the captain. "—— it! It's no use dreamin' o' sendin' 'em another line now, not till the sea goes down, is it?"

"Not worth tryin'," said the mate. "We couldn't tow 'em even if we got the hawsers across!"

"It's gettin' bad for us, too," said the captain.

"Aye," said the mate, "—— bad!"

"But we can't leave 'em! Lord! wonder what their old man is thinkin' now! Mebbe he's got a missus at home, same as myself!"

For a time neither of them spoke. And then the captain gave a sigh.

"For their own sakes, we got to stand by them, mister. So long as it's humanly possible to do somethin', we won't leave 'em. But apart from that, there's somethin' else."

He tapped with his fingers on the rail of the bridge.

"Aye, there's somethin' else. There'll be a tidy bit of salvage out o' this, mister, as you know. I'm about at my wits' ends for money. The pay I get don't go too far these days; not with a wife an' five kids to look after; it's all I can do to make ends meet at the best o' times! An', mister, when I saw the *Medea* yesterday mornin', an' heard who she was, I felt my prayers had been answered! I've a little girl, my eldest, sick; lungs all gone wrong; an' they say unless we can move her from South Shields, to a warmer climate, she won't last! An' so, apart from anythin' else, mister, apart from what the crowd aboard the *Medea's* been through, we've got to bring them to port, somehow!"

XV

LATE on a clear February afternoon the *Medea*, listed to starboard, crippled and battered from her fifty days fight with the Western Ocean, came limping into port in the charge of three tug boats, one ahead, two astern.

The day had been calm, but very cold. The sky was covered by a thin haze. The sun was low in the west. Not a breath of wind was stirring. The sea was smooth. The smoke of the chimneys on shore went drifting lazily upward.

From the shattered bridge of the *Medea* Jimmy Kerrill, standing by the side of the pilot who had come aboard off the *Nash*, heard the wild outcry of factory hooters and the whistles of the steamers and sirens and ships' bells and the cheering with a certain mild surprize. He would rather they had arrived, unnoticed, unannounced.

He thought of Black John Dorrock, Lappett, and the others who were dead; he thought of Grinton and the insurance and the salvage; his lips twitched into a smile. He thought of Eileen Mavison and became serious.

"There's the *Jabalpur*," said the pilot, "the feller that brought you in. He's been waitin' for high water. They're shoutin' for us to go ahead!"

The captain of the *Jabalpur* was waving his cap from the wing of the bridge, the men on the *Jabalpur's* decks were cheering.

Jimmy's eyes went dim. He called to his own men on the forecastle head with the boatswain.

"There's the *Jabalpur*, give them a cheer!"

He tugged at the whistle lanyard and the survivors of the *Medea's* crew cheered hoarsely.

The captain of the *Jabalpur* called through a megaphone.

"Captain, you'll come an' see me, won't you!"

Jimmy semaphored with his arms—

"Yes!"

"Haven't seen Cardiff so stirred I dunno when," said the pilot.

The uproar of bells and whistles and hooters grew louder as the *Medea* with her tugs reached the entrance of the dock.

"Wish to blazes they'd stop!" said Jimmy.

"Well, captain," said the pilot, "if you're a-grumblin' now, I dunno what you'll do when you get ashore! They're preparin' big doin's!"

Without waiting for Jimmy's reply, he moved to the other side of the bridge and shouted directions to one of the tugs.

"Married, Captain?" he asked presently.

"No," said Jimmy.

"Ah, well! she'll be waitin' to welcome you, whoever she is! I warrant."

Jimmy felt that the pilot was a talkative old idiot.

THERE was a dense, cheering crowd on the dockside as the *Medea* came alongside.

Captain Traskett, the marine superintendent, a white-bearded old gentleman, who had come aboard at the lock, with the customs officers, was on the bridge.

"I hope to heaven they're only goin' to allow people aboard with passes," said Jimmy.

The thought of the ordeal before him made him restless and uneasy. He was too tired to care for anything much except to be left alone.

"An' you say that the towin' hawsers parted five times!" said old Captain Traskett. "Well, well! Mr. Kerrill, I'm proud to know you! Wish I could say that I've got news for you that 'ud please you, but I've not! Things are bad! —— bad!"

Jimmy rang off the engines almost savagely.

"That for you!" he thought.

Dusk was falling. On shore lights were already lit. The crowd still cheered.

People began to swarm up the gangway, men and women, wives and mothers of the crew, children.

"You can't dodge 'em!" said old Captain Traskett.

Jimmy, feeling more and more nervous, climbed down the ladder to the lower bridge.

"Where's Captain Dorrock?" some one called. "Eh? Where is he?"

The flag staff on the poop had been washed away. Jimmy jerked his thumb in the direction of a bedraggled red ensign drooping half-mast on the mainmast.

Captain Traskett, swelling with importance, stepped forward.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "Allow me to introduce Mr. Kerrill. Second mate. Brought the *Medea* home; stupendous difficulties; almost unparalleled episode——"

Silly old chump! Jimmy would have tried to make his escape but he was too late.

He stood in the midst of a crowd of men who shook his hand vigorously and told him how proud they were of him; strangers, most of them, but strangers, obviously, of great authority and prominence and wealth—Traskett's manner implied all that and more—well-fed, elderly men who spoke of civic banquets and receptions and luncheons and so many other things that his head, already aching, ached intolerably and he merely grinned wearily without trying to understand what it was all about and who they all were.

And Eileen Mavison!

He wondered how he had ever dared hope that she would be there to greet him. What was Eileen to him? Or he to Eileen?

By now, perhaps, she was married; married and happy; and had forgotten that he, the second mate of the *Medea*, had ever existed!

Only one man managed to make any real impression on Jimmy's mind; and he was a big, broad man with an iron-gray beard, and he came to the point at once.

"Mr. Kerrill, Miss Eileen Mavison told me about you before we had any idea that you were going to achieve fame! You're a very lucky young man to have such a friend as Eileen! A wonderful girl, Mr. Kerrill! She'll go far! I won't keep you now; you're tired out and there are others who want to speak to you. But there's just this; directly you've had enough of the shore, you can sail as mate in one of my steamers! East Indian trade! Regular runs! What's more, Mr. Kerrill, I'm building; there'll be a master's job waiting for you in a year or so."

MacGish, pale and tired-looking, in the twilight, stood on the bridge-deck beneath, talking to a group of friends.

"If it hadn't been for Mr. MacGish, the chief engineer," said Jimmy, "nothing I did would have brought us through."

"I'll look after him," said the big man, "and any one else whom you recommend." He scribbled something in a note-book. "From what they say, Mr. Kerrill, they'll all have to be helped somehow."

Before Jimmy could ask what he meant, a little man with sharp eyes and spectacles had planted himself in front of him.

"Now, then, captain, we've got you at last. We're pooling everything. What you say to one, you say to all! Please go ahead and tell us in your own words exactly what happened!"

"What for?" said Jimmy. "The newspapers!"

"Yes!"

"Look here," said Jimmy, "I would if I could, but I'm too —— busy! I've got to be going ashore to the office, on business! See! Ask the chief engineer! He'll tell you whatever you want to know." He raised his voice. "Mr. MacGish, if you're free for a minute or two, you might step up here, will you!"

THE pale-faced Mr. Jones was surprized when Jimmy arrived at the office and told him bluntly that he must see Mr. Grinton at once.

Mr. Jones scratched his chin with the end of his pen-holder and shook his head.

"Lemme see; you're Mr. Kerrill, you say, of the *Medea!* Well, I don't think Mr. Grinton could possibly see you." He lowered his voice. "He's not been himself this past two days or so. Dunno what's troubling him exactly. He says it's his head. Myself, I think it's something to do with money. This evening, he's expecting your captain, Captain Dorrock. Maybe you've got a message I could give him."

"No," said Jimmy, "I've no message. Mr. Grinton's in there, isn't he?"

Before Mr. Jones could stop him, he strode toward the door with the ground glass panel, marked *Private*.

Jimmy was shocked at the change in Mr. Grinton's appearance. No longer spruce and well-groomed, he looked old and haggard and ill; he had lost his jauntiness of appearance and his youthful alertness; he did not speak, but sat in his swivel chair and stared at him dully.

Jimmy closed the door and approached his desk.

"Well!" he said. "Do you remember me?"

Mr. Grinton saw before him a fair-haired young man in shabby uniform—dark-blue overcoat with tarnished gold buttons, peaked cap with the badge of his own firm in front. The young man's face was very thin; there were hollows in his cheeks; his eyes were tired eyes, and yet they held a menace that made Mr. Grinton afraid.

"When did you last see me?" said the young man.

And then Mr. Grinton remembered. He sucked in his breath between his teeth and grasped the arms of his swivel chair so firmly that the knuckles showed like ivory under the skin of his hands.

"You!" he gasped. "What do you want here?"

He rose to his feet and stood, stooping forward, his palms flat on the desk in front of him.

"I've come from the *Medea*," said Jimmy.

"From the *Medea*," said Mr. Grinton hoarsely. "Yes—and you—I remember you now—insolence—I said I'd fire you! What are you—what rank?"

"I was second mate when you met me," said Jimmy. "But I brought the *Medea* home as captain!"

And though he had been looking forward to saying those few words ever since Black John Dorrock had said good-by in the chart-room, now when he was actually face to face with Grinton, not the Grinton that he knew, but this shadow, this white-faced old man, all the satisfaction he had hoped for faded.

He felt almost as if he had been boasting.

Mr. Grinton was staring at him and frowning.

"Yes, yes, of course. But where's Dorrock? Captain Dorrock! He's afraid of me. I know him. Afraid! —— him!"

"Dorrock's dead," said Jimmy. "Died from injuries. Lappett was washed overboard. I was the next senior, so I took charge of the *Medea*. Hullo! Hold up!"

Mr. Grinton was swaying to and fro on his feet. He put a hand to his heart. And then he fell back into his chair and sat huddled up, gazing in front of him, his head sunk on his chest.

"Dorrock dead!" he repeated. "Old Dorrock, eh! Serve him right! Double-crossed me, he did."

Jimmy leaned forward.

"Mr. Grinton," he said, "you wanted the *Medea* scuttled, didn't you? Before Captain Dorrock died, he signed a confession, to be handed to the proper authorities in case there was any trouble. I don't know his motive exactly for this, but I imagine he wished to put it in writing what you'd had in mind. The document might come in useful if there was any inquiry into the firm's finances or the loss of one of your other ships! D'you understand? Captain Dorrock told us he'd have done what you asked because he was forced. His wife was ill. It was for her sake he wanted the money. But word came the day before leaving New York that his wife was dead. He said you'd refused to advance the money! D'you get that? His wife was dead, Captain Dorrock's wife, the money was no use to him. He swore that he'd bring the *Medea* home. The *Laronia* would have taken us off; he wouldn't hear of it! Quite right, of course! But he had the chance. And then he died, and I promised to do my best. I've done it. The *Medea's* in. And you can't fire me! Do you know why not? Because I've resigned. I wouldn't work for you, not if you were the last shipowner in the world! You're a slave-driver. The *Medea* wasn't fit to send across the Atlantic in Winter. What's more you knew it! And how much of the cargo we carried across is genuine, and how much is dummy, I suppose there's nobody knows but you!"

Mr. Grinton listened to Jimmy's outburst in a kind of dream. He felt very ill. There was a pain in his heart, a stabbing pain that made it difficult for him to breathe or think or concentrate his thought.

"Give me that paper!" he said. "At once, or I'll—I'll——"

He did not know what he would do, quite: something desperate, of course.

"Don't be a fool, Mr. Grinton!" said Jimmy. "Why should I give *you* the paper! And don't threaten me or try any gunplay! If I see you move your hands to that drawer, Mr. Grinton, I'll take it for granted you've got a revolver! You know what that means, of course! You'll be more sorry for yourself than you are now!"

"All right, my boy!" said Mr. Grinton. "All right! It doesn't matter. I'm going away. Had a bad time of it lately. Not so young as I used be. Not so young. Money gone. See! Nothing left. Not a penny."

"What about the crew's wages?" Jimmy asked.

Mr. Grinton took an envelope off the desk.

"Here," he said. "There's money enough in this to pay the men an advance; officers, too. Not my money, my step-daughter's. She's rich: a wonderful girl: wonderful! She's paying the wages herself, out of her own money, so that you needn't wait, none of you, till the affairs of the firm are straightened! See! Kind of her, isn't it! You'll have a lien on the ship, of course! Receivers—everything mixed up—head aches—bad!"

His speech was thick and indistinct. He trembled, as he spoke, and tried to loosen his collar.

"Won'ful girl, Eileen. You brought the *Medea* home, eh! Eileen will look after you—if you give her chance—her own way, always! If she wan's you, she'll have you!" All of a sudden he straightened himself up in his chair. "You!" he said. "Who —— you? You le' my daugh'r 'lone! See! If I fin' you run' af'r her, trouble—too good f'r you—mush too good! She don' li' you—common sail'r li' you——"

After Jimmy had left the office, Mr. Grinton sat for a long time, huddled up in his chair, staring at the wall opposite and mumbling to himself.

Then he rose to his feet, very slowly, opened the safe and stuffed all the available cash and documents into a small despatch case.

When he had closed the safe he put on his hat and coat and, with the despatch case in his hand, walked out of the office.

"Jones."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Jones.

"Jones, I'm going now. If any one calls for me in the morning, tell them to wait. I'll perhaps be a little late."

"But you'll be down some time during the day, of course, sir!" said Mr. Jones.

"Of course," said Mr. Grinton. "But I'm no' very well, Jones—no' very well——"

He said good night and went out, never to return.

AS JIMMY hurried along the quayside toward the *Medea* a girl stopped him.

"Hi, mister!" she said. "Is that the *Medea?*"

"It is," he said.

He did not stop, neither did he slacken speed, and the girl trotted along by his side.

"Know anythin' about 'er, duckie?" she inquired.

"Ought to," he said. "I belong to her, anyway."

" 'Ere!" she said. "Is there a red-'eaded man called Naythorn aboard?"

They had reached the gangway.

Jimmy halted.

"Naythorn!" he said. "Naythorn!"

"Feller they crimped!"

"Oh!" said Jimmy. "Yes. Want to see him?"

She nodded.

"Ah, do I! But I ain't a-goin' aboard no ships! Not me!"

She laughed.

"If you want a kiss, take it now!"

"You're wise," said Jimmy gravely. "Shall I send him to you?"

"There's a dear!" said the girl.

Jimmy went on board.

"Is Hannigan here?"

"Yes'r," said Hannigan.

"Lady on the quay wishes to speak to some one, name of Naythorn!"

There was a laugh in the darkness as Hannigan moved to the side of the ship.

"That you, Red?" called the girl.

"Which one's that?" said Hannigan gruffly.

"It's Flossie, o' course. 'Ere, you 'urry up! He's been tryin' to skip out. He's scared. See! If you want to catch 'im, you'd better make 'aste. They got him shut in the beer cellar, but there's some pals o' his tryin' to get him out. If you don't mind, Red, you'll be too late!"

"You tell 'em," said Hannigan, "I'll be 'long with some friends o' mine in about ten minutes. I don't care 'ow many pals he has. I got two whole ship's crews waitin'; this lot an' the *Jabalpur's*. Understand! Now, you skip, my gal, an' don't get hangin' around the docks, or I'll talk to you, straight!"

The girl made off quickly.

"Beg pardon, sir!"

Jimmy, who had been listening to Hannigan, turned and saw the boatswain.

"Well, bos'n! What's up now?"

"The hands want to know if there's any chance o' gettin' an advance!"

"I'll pay them now," said Jimmy.

Before Hannigan left the ship he insisted on shaking Jimmy's hand.

"Dunno whether you'll see me at the shippin'-office or not, sir. The money's nothin'. Mebbe I won't be in no shape to sign off. I've a kind of idea, mister, it's goin' to be worth my while, sir, to find the real Hannigan, if he ain't somewhere the other end of the world. We've had trouble, sir, you an' me, but there's no malice, either side. I hated you part of the voyage, because I felt you were no good; you were in with Black John Dorrock; his second mate! Paid to do as he tole yer! An' then when Black John went, an' you'd no one to help yer, I changed over. I'd been wrong in my judgment. How? Why, Mr. Kerrill, because I seen you weren't what I thought! You tackled a job I was willin' to bet couldn't be done. You didn't lose hope, you did the best for the crowd, an' whatever we are or we ain't, we're human bein's, with feelin's, same as yerself. See! I'm proud to have been with you aboard the *Medea*, sir, an' anytime, sir, you're 'round my way, I'd take it as a kindness, sir, if you'd step in for a talk. Naythorn's my name, same as the girl said. Red Naythorn."

Jimmy was touched by the earnestness in the red-headed man's voice.

"Thank you," he said, "very much. I wouldn't want any one better to work with than you!"

"An' another thing," said the red-headed man gruffly, "you remember what Black John said after he got smashed up on the bridge. No one but me could have brought the *Medea* round into the wind! I don't mind sayin' I was pleased. Understand! Black John knew what he was talkin' about when it came to seamanship! I'd never heard him praise no one aboard ship before! An' I think after that, Mr. Kerrill, even if he'd ha' lived, I'd have let him off what I'd sworn to do to him before we reached Cardiff! Understand, Mr. Kerrill. Good-by, sir!"

The red-headed man winked solemnly And then he went ashore; and with him went the deck hands and stokehold hands of the *Medea*, craving for strong drink and the lights of Bute Street, the warmth and comfort of the bars, and ready, after their thirsts were quenched, for the fight that Hannigan had promised them they would remember as long as they lived.

THE chief engineer, whose speech showed that he had already celebrated his return to civilization, found Jimmy seated on the settee in his room, smoking a pipe and trying to read a paper by the light of a candle.

"Heh, Jamie, what's ailin' ye? Are ye no' comin' ashore?"

"Not tonight, chief: too —— tired!"

The chief blinked at him.

"Man," he said gravely, "what fur wull ye no' come ashore wi' me an' the chief engineer o' the *Jabalpur?* He's a brither Scot an' he's settin' in ma berth the noo, as drunk as a poodle! A gran' man! Ye'll lauch fit to kill yersel' jist to hear him recitin' Rabbie Burns!"

Jimmy shook his head.

"No, thank you, chief! Not tonight."

"A-weel, mebbe ye're richt! Ye can get a man to a pub but it's by nae means certain ye can mak' him drunk! An' if ye're no' drunk by midnicht the nicht, Jamie, I'll ken ye're worryin'! Listen, ha'e ye seen auld scum-face?"

"Who? Grinton? Yes."

"Did ye sort him?"

"I told him what I thought of him! He seemed pretty sick."

"An' ye didna hit him! Man, nae wunner ye're worryin'! I'd ha'e cleppit him yin ower the heid that wud ha'e gi'en him somethin' tae be sac' aboot!"

"He's all to pieces," said Jimmy. "Broken!"

"Aye, but no' broke! I ken fine he's feathered his nest! He'll no' be playin' a tin whustle on Queen Street to pick up a livin', Jamie! Nae, when you an' me are knockin' aroon' the Western Ocean next Winter an' the Winter efter, auld Grinton wull be livin' in the lap o' luxury like Solomon wi' his wives an' concubines! But, there's somethin' worryin' ye, Jim? Ye luk mees'rable! It isna the lass, is't?"

MacGish clucked his tongue.

"Man, I thocht ye had mair sense! I was afeart what wud happen! She's a leddy. Ye ken! An' you, Jim! Ye're nae mair nor a puir buddy wha gangs to sea fur a livin' on tramp steamers! Pit her oot yer mind, James, an' ye'll be happy! What I say is, an' I aye ha'e said: To —— wi' wimmen! A' o' them! A-weel, we live an' learn! An' noo, I maun gang awa! I maun see that thon drunken Scotsman I ha'e in ma berth disna set fire to himsel'—fur that was what he was tryin' to dae when I left him!"

A little later Sandy Racken, washed and shaved and dressed in his best clothes, came to the door of Jimmy's room.

"Not changed yet, Jimmy?"

"No," said Jimmy, looking up from his paper. "No."

"Aren't you goin' ashore, then?"

"No. I'm stopping aboard."

"You're stoppin' aboard!" Sandy frowned and considered the statement in all its bearings. "You're stoppin' aboard! Then you're not goin' ashore!"

"He's guessed it at last!" said Jimmy.

"But, good lord! Jimmy, aren't you goin' to see Miss Mavison? Man, you're cracked!"

"Sandy," Jimmy said, "you're cracked yourself! I'd look a pretty kind of a roughneck to go stalking up the front steps of old Grinton's house and say, 'Please, I've come calling on Miss Mavison!' He'd have me slung out of it quicker'n it takes to say!"

"Well," said Sandy, "if a girl like Eileen Mavison had taken the trouble to write to me and I'd somethin' worth sayin' to tell her, it 'd take more than old Grinton to stop me seein' her! I think, Jimmy—" he paused and frowned—"I think you're a —— fool! Well, that's your look out, not mine. It's time I was off. MacGish wants me to give him a hand with the chief of the *Jabalpur!* Good-by, James, don't ask which of the engineers is stayin' aboard, an' you'll be told no lies! If I'm not home by midnight, laddie, don't sit up for me! An' if I'm not aboard by breakfast, go to the nearest police station an' bail me out!"

LATE that night Jimmy Kerrill leaned over the bulwarks amidships. The night was very still. From the shore there came the occasional shrill whistle from an engine or the clank of coal trucks. The water lapped *hush-hush*, sleepily, against the *Medea's* hull. On a steamer moored ahead a man was singing. The lights of the city cast a glow into the sky. Westward, in a break in the clouds, stars were shining.

Jimmy knocked the ashes of his pipe against his heel. He was tired and sad, though why he should have been sad he did not know. His mood puzzled him.

Here he was, in Cardiff once more, alive and well! He might have been dead in ——

knew how many fathoms deep. And yet he was sad. Sad and lonely.

But that was ridiculous, of course!

What was there to make him sad? Why should he feel lonely? Because every one else had gone ashore! What difference would it have made to him, even supposing that MacGish or Sandy Racken should have decided to stay aboard ship to keep him company?

Wouldn't he have felt just as lonely? Probably!

But why?

He rested his elbows on the rail and held his head in his hands, and thought. After a time he came to the conclusion that he was growing old. Things that he had valued a few short months before seemed of no importance now. His ideas had changed. But, lord, what a fool he had been! What a conceited fool! An ignorant fool!

He had learned his lesson. It was the sea that had taught him. He had learned that in the face of death all men are equal; that before he could command men like Hannigan and Garle he must have command of himself; he had learned, above all, that only a very stupid man or a very young man would have considered himself ill-used because other men had not accepted him at his own high estimate.

And the future. There was the sea calling him—the sea that he hated and feared and loved.

He paused at that and considered.

Yes, the sea that he loved, in spite of everything, or perhaps, more truly, because of everything!

He would go back to sea.

The sea was cruel. The sea had no mercy on the weak or the inefficient. The sea was honest. The sea was clean.

At sea a man could forget.

A boy came up the gangway.

"You Captain Kerrill?"

"Yes," said Jimmy. "What about it?"

"I got a letter for you. Important."

Jimmy tore open the envelope and read what was written by the light of an arc lamp.

Dear Jimmy Kerrill: I am so proud and happy. If you have nothing better to do this evening, will you come to the above address—Aunt Agatha's. I have left home for good. I'll tell you everything when I see you. Come as soon as you can. I think the way you brought the *Medea* home perfectly splendid. Wasn't I right when I told you you'd make good? I was, of course. Yours ever, Eileen.

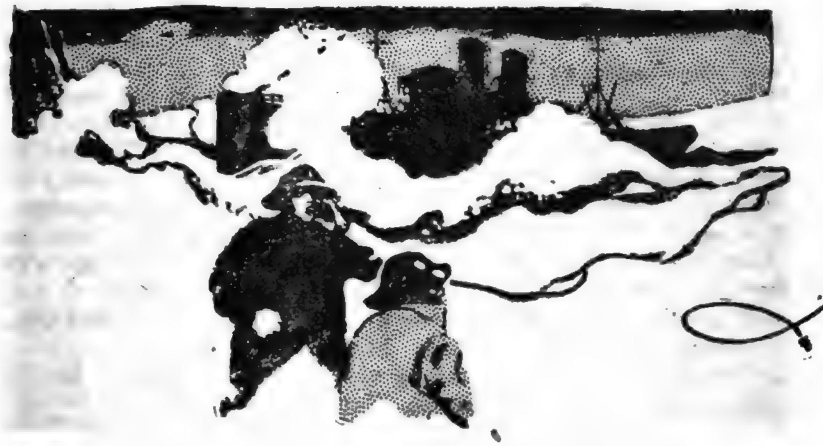
Jimmy felt insanely happy.

"Any answer?" said the boy, yawning.

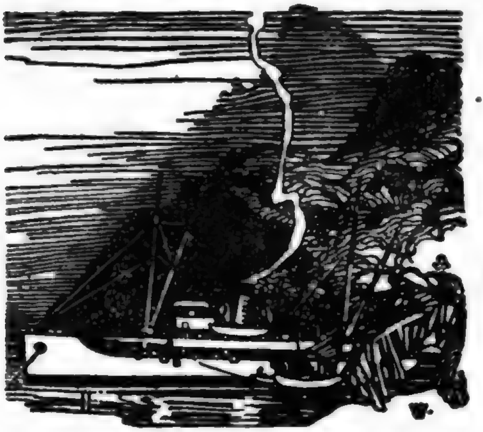
Jimmy felt in his pocket and produced a shilling.

"Here," he said, "catch! There is an answer, but it's so important I think I'd better deliver it myself."

THE END



SEND MILLIKIN TO MISAMIS



A Complete Novelette

by Ralph R. Guthrie

SPRINGFIELDS were popping and jackass batteries thundering somewhere in the Mindanaoan hinterland, but here in Zamboanga no hint of it could come to disturb the lazy somnolence of a blistering forenoon, because Millikin had reported the military cable out of order up Misamis way.

Had Millikin, who was a second lieutenant of Philippine Scouts, temporarily in charge of the local cable-station, stopped there, he would have left old General "Thunder-and-Lightning" one less thing to worry about. But he continued, in his naive Irish fashion to slip the information through to the "Old Man" that he had fallen in love with his daughter Daphne. He put it this way:

1. Cable ceased to function near Misamis, this A.M.
2. I love your daughter and request permission to marry her.

(Signed) Michael J. Millikin.
2d Lt. P. S.

"Bah!" shouted the general, so explosively that his orderly sitting on a bench outside jumped straight up in the air and came down adjusting his necktie.

There were reasons for his resentment beyond that informal mingling, in one missive, of personal with military affairs. Millikin, having come into the service by virtue of an examination and Spanish War record, had about as much standing in the social life of the tight little Post as would admit him to semi-public hops and soirées and that was all. In other respects, he was known to the general to be *de trop* until such time as he might prove his claim to be a gentleman as well as an officer. The general had an antipathy against letting a young officer marry his way across such obstacles. And as for letting him have Daphne!

"Why —— me!" roared the Old Man. I'll break his neck first."

He became conscious of a little red imp who stood close by his side and who kept whispering:

"Chuck him back to the States! Away with him!"

"I'll do no such thing!" he retorted grimly, and moved his chair. "This has got to be fought out."

Then he sent for Daphne.

What happened during their brief interview can be shortly told. It matters no more than that it motivated Millikin to do some of the things he did do—which same will be told and retold by old soldiers, in their moments off duty, so long as we maintain a military establishment in the Islands.

"Daphne," growled the general, thrusting the offending scrap of paper under his daughter's nose, like an outraged treaty. "Read this! Think what it means! Explain instantly!"

It was as if he had shouted to his startled troops:

"Point-blank! At the enemy's belt-buckles! Fire!"

"Oh!" countered Daphne, receiving the assault with the imperturbability of seasoned shock-battalions taking expected punishment.

She took the letter and for a while all was quiet except for the general's stertorous breathing. She read through to the last word, turned the paper over, noted that nothing was on the back. Then she laid it down with a sigh of relief.

"Well," she declared, finally, "in a case of that kind—the cable being out, and you needing it badly, I suppose—send Millikin. He'll fix it in a jiffy."

She was powdering her nose.

"But, dash it!" roared her sire. "I don't want your advice on military matters. What about the proposal in that letter? That's what I want—explained."

"Oh, that!" deprecated Daphne. "Why, that's just as it stands. It seems to me he has made himself very clear. I have told him that unless he wins recognition from you—does something really meritorious, you know— Well, we'll wait until he does, and you do."

"You'll wait a good, long time then!" exploded the general. "I'm not going to extend recognition to a namby-pamby croquet player. When I do, you can have him, and welcome. He'll jolly well deserve it."

A few minutes later, after the girl had retired, still smiling and somehow looking very triumphant, he picked up the letter in very much the same manner an entomologist examines a new specie of centipede, and devoted his attention to the postscripts. Later still, he pushed a button and the adjutant entered.

"How about the cable to Misamis?" he demanded bluntly of that official.

"It's in a bad shape," replied the adjutant. "The operators say it has bursted its sheath somewhere near the mouth of the Lintogoup, in Panguil Bay. Combatant groups operating forty miles south of Misamis are in a bad way for communications."

"Rebels cut it?"

"No, sir. It's a leak. Has been faulty for three years but still serviceable. The reason it hasn't been fixed is that a test-set goes crazy on that cable, registering all sorts of uncanny things. Just at present the Moros will snipe——"

"What would you advise?"

"Send Millikin—" began the adjutant.

"That's all!" yelled the general. "Send me Sergeant Tompkins of the Signal Corps, immediately. I think he is saner than you are."

Old Thunder-and-Lightning was looking as placid as a Swiss lake when the sergeant entered. He made it a rule not to frighten enlisted men with his bruskness.

"Now, sergeant," he said to the grizzled veteran of the Whispering Wires, "I have a problem in engineering for you."

"Very well, sir." The sergeant thought it was going to be an efficiency test.

"Yes. Well! Suppose the following: There is a cable which runs through the heart of the Moro up-rising as a land-line, finally dipping into a river and a bay. Now, in the bay it has developed trouble. I can reach it with a small steamer. How would you go about making the repair?"

Tompkins mulled it over with his eyes shut.

"Well, sir," he declared. "First, I'd take a Fisher test-set and apply it to the shore-end, testing into the bay. The dial would tell me exactly how far out, in miles, or yards, the break would be found. I would go out that distance, fish up the line and test back."

"Is the test-set absolutely accurate?"

"Absolutely, sir. You see there is a set of resistance-balances in the box, and if they are carefully calibrated——"

"Never mind the technique. I'm dealing strictly with facts. Suppose you tested the shore end and found the break to be out three miles. Then you went out three miles, as you say you would do, and tested back, and the box said the break was two miles farther back than where you tested first. Sounds crazy, but we are just supposing."

"Yes, sir. There has been a case very much like that up in Panguil Bay, near Misamis. A party of expert cable-men took a look at it once. After a week of fishing they just stopped short and let it go. I understand, sir, that two of the experts resigned and two others stopped drinking."

"Good! Well, that cable is now entirely out of commission. It is very important at this time that it be kept working night and day. Datto Ming is on the ground and there is great danger of an ambuscade. Now what?"

The sergeant pondered briefly.

"In that case, sir," he said, at last, "knowing the whole job is uncanny, and there is danger, and that you need a man who will be able to fight without stopping work—in that case, I'd send Lieutenant Millikin. He'd put her through for you, sir."

"The ——! You too! All right; I'll think it over."

Once again the commander of the Blue Army was obliged to delete portions of his plan of defense.

"I'm up against the surprize element wherein the enemy develops unexpected strength," he told himself. "Therefore, I'll take to horse and ride down to his *barrio* and take a look at this man Millikin."

MILLIKIN, of the Philippine Scouts, was a fine figure of a man, and as he drilled his two-score dusky warriors in a coconut grove in the movements of, "pass in review," he thundered his commands in a voice that carried and seemed to mean business. The Filipinos who acted upon them like a well-ordered machine were dapper and soldierly, and the blistering sunshine was flashed back into the teeth of Old Sol from burnished barrel and polished rifle-stock.

But under the left arm of every man was a weapon not an issue of ordnance in any army under the heavens—a squawking, uncomfortable-looking fighting-cock, with his game little head pointed to the rear, his feet gripped in his owner's left hand.

As the troops halted and brought their pieces to earth, Millikin stormed at them like a pirate chief.

"Private Hay-zoo Marie!" he bawled. "—— your soul, you black Omadhaun. What do you think you've got there? A sack of millet? Keep that bird's feet up at an angle of forty-five degrees. Rest!"

Thereupon he spied the general approaching through the trees, called, "Attention!" and saluted.

"Dismiss your detachment," roared the general, and dismounted, his face as red as a boiled beet.

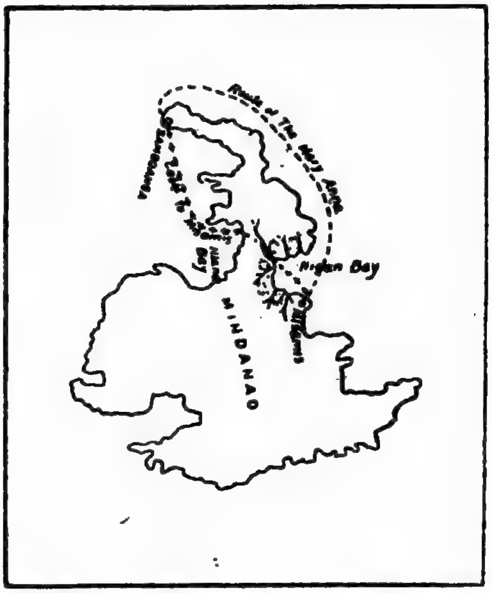
For five minutes, as Milikin would have it, the air was blue with highly seasoned abuse, reprimand and invective. Then the general stopped with a curt invitation to Millikin to bare his soul. The reply was Gaelic, naive and unexpected.

"General," said the lieutenant with an air of humility that somehow didn't fit his words. "In spite of all you have just said, I still love your daughter and—I can't help it if these wild Islanders insist that if they leave their roosters, some bunk-fatiguer will steal them. It's the way they've got."

Then with a faint touch of pride he added:

"I have never been to West Point, but neither have these soldiers. We are all children of the black loam and the backwoods; but we have, each, a B.S. in the Academy of Give-and-Take. I can take these *hombres* as they stand, birds and all, and whip any other outfit of my size on the Archipelago."

It may be that something about these words struck a responsive chord in the older man's being, for he smiled a bit tolerantly and changed the subject to the business at hand. Again it is possible that the painted Imp had returned to whisper in the general's ear that a youth who defied all the canons of army traditions, would fail miserably in a crisis. However, that might be doing the Old Man an injustice; for really, there was no alternative.



At any rate he accepted the advice of his counselors and sent Millikin that night aboard the two-hundred-and-fifty-ton contract steamer *Mary Anna*, to repair the cable at Misamis. The lieutenant was allowed to take whom and what he chose, but at the last moment, the commandant, as an afterthought, ordered a Colt one-pounder and gun-crew transferred to the *Mary Anna* from the former Spanish gunboat, *Isla de Cuba*, which happened to be in Zamboanga for repairs.

He did it to reassure Daphne, but it must be said to his credit also that he did not forget to have the lieutenant up to his veranda for a "farewell and refreshments" with her, and contrived to be called away suddenly—leaving the twain alone just before the boat whistle. But that was the way of the old army. The old martinet had no notion to surrender.

"Darling," murmured the girl, smiling through a mist of tears, "this is your trial and father is your judge. Don't give up unless—unless it means the loss of your precious life. The nasty old cable isn't worth the extreme sacrifice. It is real mean of father to send you when he knows how much I care."

"Leave it to the Scouts," laughed Millikin. "It's for glory, my girl, glory, that we sail the Spanish Main this night."

Then he kissed her, ardently, luxuriantly, and was gone—whistling as he buckled on his revolver.

THERE was very little of the dominant race in evidence on the *Mary Anna*, when he arrived on her deck that evening. Chief in proportion, were the Filipinos of his own detachment, Tagaloga, Viszayana, Ygorrotes, Sulus—thirty in all. Then there was the ship crew of twice as many Malays and Dyaks. Against this wide colored margin, could be counted Millikin, Sergeant Tompkins, Corporal Ketchoff, a telegraph operator, Captain Lee Bumpey the skipper, two German mates, Tipton, an Englishman—to act as interpreter—and the gun-crew of five gobs with Chief Gunner's Mate Hughey in charge.

Captain Bumpey, once a Cape Cod fisherman, cocked his weather eye on the mess, and showed a brown snag of a tooth through his beard.

"Anybody here born in Maine?" he demanded.

There was a general shaking of bristled heads. The Englishman looked surprized and a trifle disgusted.

"Now I call that a bit of a question!" he exclaimed and walked away.

Bumpey winked at the lieutenant.

"That's all right," he said, cheerfully. "I was; so the situation is saved."

"Young man," he went on, taking Millikin aside, "I don't know yet what we've started out after, but I've got two hundred and fifty tons, dead weight, in this old steamer, and a gun of umph-caliber, for'ard, and we leave in two minutes. Let's talk it over."

The lay-out as it was explained to Captain Bumpey, amounted to about this:

There is a one-hundred-and-fifty-mile cable running from Zamboanga on the southern tip of Mindanao, to Tacuran, on Llana Bay, near its southwestern terminus, the island being pear-shaped, with the small end pointing to the southeast.

At Tacuran, the cable comes up into a land telegraph line that crosses, due north, to Panguil Bay, where it submerges again until it reaches the Moro city of Misamis, on the southeastern shore of the Mindanaon Sea. The trouble appeared to be in the Panguil section of the cable, under the bay, not far from Misamis.

The most alarming feature of the mission was that approximately one hundred thousand hostile Moros swarmed over the northern portion of the island; but there were other probable sources of annoyance to be considered, as well.

Seven great rivers tumble their muddy tides into the sanctuary of Panguil Bay. They rise somewhere in the black forests of the interior amid the plateaus, and sweep downward through veritable holes in the vegetation, rubbing elbows with the sentinel peaks posted by Nature to check the punitive inroads of the sea. The cable winds its way up one of them for five miles to an abandoned block-house, once known as "Station B," where it takes to the poles.

All of those rivers were alive with crocodiles and their banks overhung with jungle growth through which stalked, crept, or crawled death in many forms.

Add to all of this the important fact that nobody outside of Manila headquarters had the faintest idea which of the seven aforesaid rivers was the Lintogoup.

To solve a cable problem successfully you must be given at least one known end to work from.

The *Mary Anna* slipped out of Zamboanga harbor on the evening of October thirteenth, and arrived off Misamis thirty-six hours later. Millikin took Tipton ashore with him to interview the *presidente*. They found him nervous, elderly and inclined to betel-nut chewing. Tremendously scared he was, too.

"Dey heathen Moro he geet me bimebye," he wailed, running his fingers wildly through his pompadour. "Dey Moro he hate me becuz me veree mooch Cree-shun. Me wanna pull me outa dees village, preetee *pronto*. Hey? You geet me? Me go when you geet back dees here, I betchu!"

After a short harangue, the *presidente* consented to furnish two native guides, neither very anxious to go. They were both Christians; and Datto Ming, the local champion of Mohammedanism, was just then making a collection of grisly souvenirs for his council-chamber.

From Misamis the ship steered across the Bay, coming to anchor half a mile off the inward curve of the shore and every man in the party gathered on the deck to drink in a gorgeous sunset. Nothing more beautiful can be imagined. The patches of saffron light on the encircling peaks, the limpid azure water with a silvery, woman's scarf of sun-path upon its bosom, the reflection of lordly coconut and meekly bowing date-palm at the water's edge.

As night stole swiftly down upon them, the sky became shot across with radiating bands of ultramarine and old gold. Then darkness caught them wondering at the mysteries of the universe or thinking of home, according to their individual bent. From the wilderness came the raucous cries of night birds or the crashing of wild creatures, coming down to drink.

Corporal Ketchoff, acting duty sergeant, was whispering to his "Goo-Goos."

"There's a —— fine chance fer something snappy t' turn up in this here trip," he was saying. "It won't be a water-haul, and yer can bet your last peso on that. Not wit' Millikin. You guys stick wit' me and you'll come out shining. Stick wit' me and stick wit' each other—elbow ter elbow. Now cheese it below and polish up yer ol' Springfields! *Vamose!*"

Forward, Millikin and Captain Bumpey were conversing intermittently across the tarpaulin jacket of the one-pounder.

"I suppose she works O.K.?" queried the lieutenant casually.

"I suppose so," replied the seaman with like indifference.

"Good night."

"Good night, my son."

OLD SOL, the next morning, showered a curse of blistering heat on Panguil Bay, but two native *bancas* were lowered and equipped with rope, grappling hooks and timbers of various lengths. Eight Dyaks from the ship's crew took the oars of each, and Millikin's soldiers squatted on their arms under the canopies. Tipton and Tompkins in the first boat, Millikin and Corporal Ketchoff in the second, was the way the expedition was arranged on account of the Englishman's knowledge of island dialects, and the sergeant's erudition in cable-lore.

The *bancas* pulled into the nearest river and fought their way slowly up-stream, keeping close to the shade.

From the branches of the great, tropical trees fruit-bats suspended themselves, like soiled dish-rags; monkeys chattered behind a screen of foliage; parokeets flashed green iridescence among the mangoes. This in the upper half of the picture. Below: Alligators lounged underneath the waters of still bayous, only their nostrils visible. Clouds of carnivorous gnats and mosquitoes fogged the tops of water-reeds and *cogan*-grass.

The first stream proved to be a wrong guess; so did the second, the third and the fourth. While exploring the fifth, Tipton discovered a garrulous Moro boy prodding for frogs and interrogated him at length.

Millikin's *banca* came alongside.

"Cheerio!" Tipton shouted cheerfully. "I have good news and bad news, all mixed up like your army slumgullion. You should hear what this blighter tells me! He says this is the jolly old Lintogoup, and the cable station is only five miles up-stream."

"That sounds good," agreed the lieutenant. "What is the wail about?"

"Datto Ming has taken over the *barrio* of Lucan and it is between us and the station. He is occupying it with two thousand bolo-men, and this chocolate birdie says they have plenty of good rifles too."

Millikin addressed himself profanely to the skies. He was terribly hot and tired from sitting in a cramped position.

"All right," he decided finally. "Back to the *Mary Anna* we go. We'll see if we can't coax her around these sand-bars. I was thinking of the *datto*. Maybe we had better pay him an official visit. What's he doing in Lucan?"

"The lad says he is resting from his forays just at present. It seems he has the finest fighting-birds on the island. The foxy old blighter is holding high carnival with pit-battles night and day until he has accumulated all of the loot gathered by his men. A jolly fine idea! What?"

But the lieutenant was busy directing the return of his flotilla through clouds of heckling mosquitoes. As the boats shot around a turn in the river and out into the Bay, a bullet, beautifully dum-dummed, hurtled out of the gathering dusk and imbedded itself in one of the oars.

That night, Millikin was too tired to think coherently on any subject, but the next morning he did a lot of it up to about 10 A.M. After that hour he began to do peculiar things.

First, he had Captain Bumpey put back into Misamis where he went ashore in a small boat and spent an hour closeted with the *presidente*. That official was not nearly so cast-down, as when the lieutenant had last seen him. Just that morning he had heard over the Manila wire that the governor-general was coming down to Misamis, in a day or two, in his yacht, as part of an inspection tour through the archipelago. He was quite certain that the governor-general would not come if there were danger. Whatever happened at the conference, it appeared to have won the unqualified approval of the dusky chief plus his immediate cooperation, neither of which, ordinarily considered, would be of much assistance in the prosecution of a tactical movement. However, Millikin had not asked any great favor and for such as he asked he paid spot cash.

He had acquired thirty or more small latticed crates, at ten centavos each—total three pesos. This came out of his private war-chest. From the same source, he had purchased for ten pesos the assistance of no less a personage than Manuel José Ysobel Robledo y Martinez, renegade member of the entourage of Datto Ming and chief custodian of his majesty's game-chickens, in the days before Robledo turned "Creesshun."

When the *datto* finally had caught this henchman worshipping at strange shrines, he had done the usual and obvious thing—slit his ears and confiscated Robledo's family, which consisted of, as he would put it, "three unconquerable fowls and my wife." The *senora*, later, returned to his arms, he explained, but his birds—misery! They were still in the grip of the tyrant.

The unloading of the crates on the deck of the *Mary Anna* created something of a furor but there is a majesty which doth hedge about a second lieutenant, that forbade questioning—except from Bumpey who knew little about the dignities of the service and cared still less.

"Now what?" he demanded, smiling out of the corners of his eyes. "Goin' to turn my ship into an incubator?"

"C'mere," invited the lieutenant, beckoning with his thumb and strolling aft, away from the gaping throng.

There he told the sea-dog all about it. When he was through, Bumpey threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

"I hope you get away with it, kid," he declared when his mirth would let him speak. "Gol-ding you, if I don't back you to the last fathom—though the Old Man, like as not, will send us all to the booby-hatch when we get back down to Zamboanga. Let's go!"

* * *

THE short haul across the Bay to the mouth of the Lintogoup was accomplished before sunset. By dusk the little steamer had crowded her tortuous way around the sand-bars, coming to anchor, at last, half a mile below the lights of Lucan.

Then it was that Lieutenant Millikin summoned the acknowleged and authorized leaders of his polyglot command into his cabin for an exposition of his plans. He directed his remarks first to Corporal Ketchoff.

"Corporal," he said, "you are now in supreme command of the right wing of the invading armies. How long have you been in the service?"

"Fifteen years," came the reply. Then, after a brief pause, "Two months and twenty-one days."

"Plus six hours and twenty-three minutes," sternly corrected his superior, consulting his watch. "Never be ashamed of the truth. And always be exact.

"Now, I am going to land you with fifteen men, in just fifteen minutes, and you are going to Lucan from the near side and perch yourself on the safe side of a small hill which you will find waiting for you. Your men will be equipped for combat but you will sit pretty until the Honorable Robledo enters the town, but you will keep your retreat to the boat covered. When Robledo returns you will make yourselves comfortable until you hear heavy firing from the opposite side of the village. Then you will dash into Lucan without making a sound.

"How much of my operations order are you soaking up?" he demanded suddenly with suspicion.

The corporal repeated it almost word for word, finishing with—

"Then I will cut loose and attack the town."

"You will do nothing of the sort," corrected the lieutenant, frowning with mock severity at his subordinate. "Corporal Ketchoff, I accuse you of trying to dignify your expedition with the name of battle. In reality, it's only a humble attempt on my part to rob the hen-roosts of my good friend Datto Ming. You will therefore follow Robledo to the royal chicken-house, seize all the birds therein and make for the boat. When are you to do this?"

"When I hear heavy firing across the town."

"Correct! You're off. Get out of here and don't bungle a detail. Don't forget to make yourselves comfortable for an hour or two on the hill-top—after Robledo gets back."

Millikin again consulted his watch.

"In ten minutes," he went on, "the second expedition will be on its way. Tipton will remain here because he's a noncombatant."

"Oh, I say! That's a bit thick!" protested the Englishman.

"There isn't going to be much fighting, if any," consoled the lieutenant. "There'll be less interpreting. You will stand by to transmit a message to the prisoner we are going to bring back.

"Tompkins and the rest of the armed forces of the United States, here represented, will accompany me. We will sneak past Lucan and take position on high ground on the edge of town. At a certain time I will give the signal and we will open fire by volleys, and then jump into the town, frisk it of one prisoner and out again. Just like a cat going after—and getting—a mouse. Tompkins, turn out the troops."

The *banca* carrying the soldiers, rowed by Dyaks, kept well away from the bank nearest the town, but otherwise observed little precaution against ambuscade. Millikin was banking confidently on the Moro penchant for slumber. The Borneo oarsmen are among the finest in the world, and it was still earlier than 1 A.M. when the *banca* made a clean landing and the soldiers disembarked.

They worked their way, single file, to a commanding slope where they not only could dominate Lucan but could also envision the whole of the smaller hill where Ketchoff and his band were ensconced, awaiting the return of the spy. Millikin and the old Signal Corps man were lying on their stomachs slightly behind their firing-line, conversing in whispers.

"There is the hut we will raid for our prisoner," the lieutenant declared, designating with his pistol-barrel a black splotch in the starlight, five hundred yards below them. "Over yonder, though you can't see him, is Ketchoff. When we fire, Datto Ming will bring his whole mob over here to round us up for a barbecue which will give the corporal his opportunity to steal the *datto's* game cocks."

The sergeant had been trying for half an hour *not* to ask his superior a pertinent question. Now he blurted it out—

"Lieutenant, why didn't you tell Ketchoff to give us a preconcerted signal to tell us when Robledo gets back, and they are ready for the raid?"

Millikin chuckled into the crown of his campaign-hat which he had taken off to cool his brow.

"Preconcerted signals sometimes go wrong," he retorted, sagely. "Soldier nature is always true to form. You heard me tell Ketchoff to make his party comfortable as soon as everything was jake, didn't you? All right. They are out of sight of the enemy, although we can see their position from here. Now what is the first thing a soldier does when he wants to make himself restful for a long wait, and he is given the command to snatch a little bunk-fatigue on the grass?"

"Lights up!" replied Tompkins, catching the idea.

"Exactly. All we've got to do is to watch for their matches when they start to smoke. I'm pained and surprized at your lack of intelligence."

Almost an hour passed by in absolute silence on the slope when the watchers saw a tiny spark glimmer and go out on the hill-top below and across the town. There was another and still another. Millikin grasped Tompkins by the arm.

"Let her rip!" he whispered tensely and the sergeant gave the necessary orders.

The stilly tropical night was shattered by their volleys, while from the vale below arose the clamor of a population rudely torn from their slumbers.

At the fourth volley, Millikin and Tompkins slipped away silently. Only a second or two seemed to have been consumed in that headlong rush down the mountain. Without slackening their pace, shoulder to shoulder, they leaped against the flimsy door of the nearest hut and crashed in with it straight at the throat of a befuddled Moro who was in the act of drawing his *kris*.

Then they were back up the hill with their astonished captive. So quickly was the whole thing accomplished that their own men, intent on their firing, went on pouring their volleys into the village in complete ignorance of what had taken place.

The rest of the action was a case of good judgment. Millikin could not tell, of course, when Corporal Ketchoff and his raiders might be through with their task, but he allowed them a good twenty minutes at the imminent risk of bringing down on his own head the horrors of a *bolo* rush.

When at last he did give the order to retire, he allowed his followers to make up for lost time. By the time Datto Ming had rallied his hornets and swept over the mountain side his renowned pavilion of gamecocks had been looted of one hundred and thirty birds, and both parties participating in the deed were safely back on the *Mary Anna*.

Tipton, who was a bit of a war-horse in his way, was foaming at the most extraordinary proceeding which had left him out of the fun.

"I say, it's a bit thick, you know!" he expostulated. "You told me yourself there wasn't to be much of an action, and there you go making an awful bally-hoo as soon as you are off the old steamer. What did you bring me along for, if you had no intention of using me?"

"That's all right, old horse," replied the lieutenant. "There wasn't any action. Just a bally-hoo, as you most aptly put it. What took place was a raid in force, or *in toto*, or something like that. The real action begins now. You tell this old jazzbo we have rounded up—before we turn him loose—to tell Datto Ming that his gamecocks will be returned to him in one month's time, provided he keeps his unneighborly vagabonds from interfering with me or my cable.

"Tell him to tell the Datto we have arranged with the *presidente* of Misamis to drop the birds on a sand-bar within plain sight of Lucan, but if he fires so much as one shot in our direction, his birds pass by right of conquest to his old friend and faithful servitor, Robledo. He is to understand that the compact does not include the roosters he stole from the same Mr. Robledo. Shoot it to him rapidly, because we want our sleep."

THE actual work of locating the insulation fault in the Misamis cable began late the following morning. The delay was for the purpose of resting the tired raiding-party which must now turn itself into a labor-gang, the chief qualifications of which must be strong backs and a greed for punishment.

While Millikin and his men slept, the Dyak deck-hands, under the supervision of the interpreter, Tipton, robbed the *Mary Anna* of her graceful contour by hanging chicken-coups where they could be plainly seen—on the masts, from the shrouds, over the sides. The *bancas*, in town, were likewise caparisoned.

This having been done there was no reason why the steamer should not sail past Datto Ming's headquarters and she did this very thing, impudently nosing as close to shore as the tortuous channel would allow so that the Moro chief could listen to the music of his captured birds. The *datto*, in fact, was on the bank, wildly gesticulating with his hands as the *Mary Anna* slid smoothly past. He had a few anxious remarks to pass to Lieutenant Millikin, the great Americano *commandante*. Translated into English, the conversation ran this wise—

"How about getting my chickens back?"

"Nothing doing, for one month from date."

"Will I get them all back then?"

"No doubt about it—if you behave yourself and keep an eye on the telegraph and cable junction, up-stream, so that no one can cut the lines."

"But Datto Fabiano is in that neighborhood with two thousand hostiles. He will attack you sooner or later. If he does, do I still get my birds back?"

"We will be responsible for anything that happens up to until tomorrow night; after that, you handle Datto Fabiano."

"*Bueno!*"

"*Bueno!*" And so the treaty was made and insular history shows today that it made good.

There was no further incident except

that one of the soldiers shot and killed a wild-pig which had come down to the water's edge to drink. This departure from routine occurred after the *Mary Anna* had come to anchor and while the lieutenant and his cable-testing party were proceeding upstream in their two *bancas*.

The pig killing will not receive even honorable mention when Mr. Ridpath finally decides to write the history of the Moro uprising. But the possession of a freshly slaughtered porker caused a wail to go up from the tired and hungry soldiers who, by this time, were thoroughly tired of "canned Willie." They wanted to eat a real meal and they desired, above all things, to spend a night ashore so they could stretch their legs without kicking some one else on the shins.

When a commander of troops pays heed to such a crying need, and everything turns out lovely, he is immediately set down by his judges as a thoughtful officer. But, if he does, and it don't—well, he's weak and it goes on his record that he oughtn't to be trusted.

Millikin, being human, hungry and tired, took a chance and the glow of his camp-fire apprised the prowling patrols of Datto Fabiano that an enemy had bivouacked in their midst.

The boats put into a little bayou and moored within a stone's throw of a moss-covered shanty, once the telegraph-station, but now containing only a junction box where the cable and land-line met. While the roast was cooking, a sentry, making his first rounds, fired twice at a dusky form seen lurking in the bamboo at the base of the overshadowing hill.

Nothing more portentous happened that night. Nevertheless it was eerie and full of potentialities. There was an old Spanish cemetery on the slope near by where a penal colony had been massacred in bygone days, and a leaning, granite cross proclaimed the futility of expecting mercy from the heathen. Mosquitoes arose in clouds from the mango swamps at twilight, and no means of successfully combating them could be discovered. At any moment the hideous, encroaching jungle might vomit forth a fanatical horde of head-hunters to cut the soldiers' throats dexterously before they could leap to arms.

Only the natives could snatch a few moments sleep. Millikin sat just outside the cabin, alert and watchful, a rifle across his knees, peering into the blackness for the ugly visage of an enemy and seeing everywhere, instead, the gentle, brunette countenance of Daphne. Occasionally he cursed himself for a blunderer, realizing that he must leave a few men at the cabin the next day to make the shore-tests, while he examined the cable down-stream. He resolved to put Sergeant Tompkins and one Scout at this point of danger but to take them off at the earliest possible moment.

The night passed without anything untoward turning up and the first reading of the test-set at daylight showed the cable-leak to be only two miles down the river in the direction of the *Mary Anna* which had taken position some distance above Lucan in order to keep a weather eye on that truculent town.

When the *bancas* shoved off that morning they were lashed together with ropes and held slightly apart by a plank platform which was to be inserted under the cable and at the same time form a footing for the Filipinos who were to haul the slimy length up from the depth. A point two miles down-stream from the cabin was designated by the instrument as the place of rupture, so there the first "fishing" took place.

The cable was dragged over the planks with much labor and roped to the platform. Then it was cut at either side of the break. Millikin found the line working toward Misamis, Ketchoff holding a short "key conversation" with the American operator there. He could not, however, "raise" Tompkins at the cabin.

The test-set next was attached to the non-working end and a reading made. Here the mystery began to develop. The fault was located five miles back in the direction of the cabin, or, in other words, three miles beyond it, in the land-line. The corporal began to swear.

"Never mind the music," reprimanded the lieutenant. "Repair your incision and we will row under the cable, feeding it back over the planks, until we have examined every inch of it—if it takes until doomsday."

"But that is exactly what the other party did," remonstrated Ketchoff. "They tested every twenty-five yards until they were within two hundred yards of the old station. It was the same, every time; the break was from two to five miles farther on in the land-line, although the land-line was in perfect operation. They finally just threw up their hands and quit."

"They had a right to throw up their hands, but they had no right to quit," declared the lieutenant solemnly.

He sat pondering a while with his chin in his hands.

"Wait a minute, Ketchoff," he exclaimed. "You said they tested to within two hundred yards of the old station, and then quit."

"Yes sir."

"All right, we'll take up the test where they left off. I want to be within shooting distances of that station, any way."

An hour later the *bancas*, starting from a point near the cabin, were rowing under the cable with the current. It was easy going. Within three boat-lengths of the bank the *bancas* came to an abrupt halt and the men began hauling loop after loop straight up from the bottom of the river.

It all dawned on them in an instant. The original cable-laying crew had completed its task with several surplus miles in the ship's hold and rather than carry it back had connected the end to the land line and heaved the remainder overboard.

Before noon, so quickly had all hands worked, a neat rupture in the insulation was discovered and tests made both ways from it showed a clear line. Millikin's task was accomplished.

The repair had been made and the last loop reconsigned to its fluvial bed, when a second untoward event burst upon them to disrupt their schedule and throw them momentarily into panic. Mundo, one of the *presidente's* guides, who had fallen asleep on his plank at the first opportunity, fell overboard with a loud splash. The Dyaks thought an alligator had him and began to yell:

"Goopey! Goopey!"

The Filipino went completely out of sight and came up with a blood-curdling scream. The shouts of the Dyaks instantly unnerved him.

"Goopey!" he shouted back, and dived.

When he came up he was far downstream, making for the opposite bank.

Seizing an ax, Millikin severed the lashings and the two *bancas* took up the pursuit. Meanwhile the soldiers fired at every sleeping alligator within sight. It was all to no avail. The panicky native reached the mango marsh for which he had been heading, clambered up and dashed out of sight, still screaming—

"Goopey!"

It was learned, months later, that he kept up his frantic pace until he reached Misamis, twelve miles away.

WHILE the party were tearing their breeches and cotton shirts, bellowing assurances to Mundo and getting no further response, a sinister sound smote Millikin's ears.

From far up-stream where he had left two enlisted men testing from the old telegraph-station, came the staccato *pop! pop!* of rifles. His face grew a shade paler under its coat of tropical tan.

"Man the boats!" he thundered. "Upstream with all your might. Men, get ready to make a landing under fire."

The Dyak is a small but hardy individual with plenty of the fatalistic sort of courage so remarkably conspicuous in Mohammedan-influenced peoples of all climes. Moreover he is an excllent hand at the paddles, getting the most out of a synchronous walking movement, front to rear, and back again. The boats fairly flew.

All the time the sound of a desultory firing kept up and within one hundred yards of the beleaguered station-house bullets began to splash the boat with jets of muddy water, and sang their brief songs of death overhead.

The lieutenant kept to the far shore until well above the landing-place, and then, with lightning-like strokes, the Dyaks turned in a semi-circle and made for shore with the full strength of the current behind them. Beaching and landing were accomplished at precisely the same moment, but Millikin, true to army teachings, "to attack when in doubt," did not lead his men toward the cabin, but took them by rushes toward the high, heavily-wooded ground on the Moro left flank.

A Dyak was killed and two soldiers wounded as they clambered up the bank, and Millikin got a bullet through his shoulder twenty yards farther on as they began the penetration of the woods. Nevertheless he kept on.

At last they took shelter behind a rocky ledge where they could protect themselves, rake the bamboo where the Moros seemed to be concealed and covered the approaches to the cabin at the same time.

"Now, if I could only see something to blaze away at, I'd be a happy man," gasped the lieutenant, turning over on his back for first-aid treatment. "This thing of fighting unknown quantities of —— good warriors with nine soldiers and a crowd of unarmed and untrained Dyaks, isn't a sinecure."

On account of a low run of ammunition, the men were ordered to withhold their fire for emergencies. Every man realized that there must be a fierce hand-to-hand conflict soon. To rescue the two men in the station and withdraw was impossible. The Moros would look at the transaction in the light of a retreat and, rushing the boats, probably murder the entire party without much annoyance to themselves.

Millikin was just formulating further plans for aggressive action when there came a sound of great slashing of *bolos* and a few minutes later the bamboo was rent asunder. With blades cutting circles in the air, about two hundred Moros debouched from the jungle mass below, directly in front of them, and started in a wild gallop up the slope.

The Moro is not much of a tactician but he is a confirmed believer in wholesale blood-letting and direct attack. Else he never would have essayed to climb the three-hundred-yard incline of slippery, exposed shale, even against a handful of protected enemies.

They had no sooner showed themselves when the two soldiers in the shanty cut into their number for three or four casualties and Millikin swept a dozen more into oblivion. They were checked momentarily, but came on again. Bolts clicked and rifles spat wickedly from behind the ledge. They succeeded in getting half-way up when, for some unexplainable reason, the Moros in the rear began to utter loud cries of warning and they tumbled back again, the thicket closing behind them though the steel-jacketed missiles continued to whistle and shriek and thud in their midst. The slope was dotted with still and writhing naked forms marking accurately where the battle had turned.

The withdrawal had come just in time to save Millikin as three out of the nine rifles had jammed and the men were exhausted. It is not easy to pump a Springfield and withstand its kicks.

"Now I wonder what the blighters are up to!" exclaimed Tipton running a cleaning-rod through the barrel of his revolver. "They're not going to quit, that's easy. I suppose it's a flanker, this time."

The answer to the puzzle came shortly when a bullet, soft-nosed and malevolent, neatly amputated the middle finger of Corporal Ketchoff's right hand. It came from the heights above them.

It is probable that, if the first Moro who reached high ground hadn't fired, this story would have ended with details of a massacre. But he did and, carrying their wounded, the plucky little band leaped out of their cover and charged wildly down the slippery hill to the cabin without further loss. This movement gave them such time as it might take the natives to return down-hill to their jungle, but it left them in an uncomfortable state of siege and their *bancas* in danger of capture. Things were beginning to look precarious.

Millikin glanced at his watch, thought of darkness, and then shuddered. Darkness would mean the end, nothing less. Dusk might help confuse a *bolo* rush during a dash for the boats, but it was two hours yet. The men were peering anxiously through ancient peep-holes and firing occasionally whenever a head showed itself through the bamboo.

"We'll get a charge in less than five minutes," warned Tipton. "Get ready!"

At that very instant another unaccountable thing happened. There sounded a short, sighing note from above, followed by a blinding flash and a puff of black smoke over the bamboo. Then a series of belated barks from the river and the air was pierced by caterwauling, complaining noises while the tall grasses weaved and bellowed out from the force of expanding gasses.

A one-pounder in action!

Disregarding the enemy for the moment, the defenders rushed to the door and threw it wide open. There, half a mile down stream and with her nose crammed into a mud-bar, was the *Mary Anna*, Captain Bumpey commanding, her bow wreathed with the lacey smoke of battle. The army was being ably supported by the fleet.

"Let's go," said Millikin cheerfully. "There'll be no more excitement today."

A SLEEK, white yacht lay off the barnacle-encrusted pier at Misamis, its new paint and polished brass-work making it unique among the score of dingy craft halter-tied to posts or sleeping at anchor near by. Heat waves distorted the perspective about its stacks, its decks, its flawless lines of hull and super-structure. At a little distance it looked like a graceful, unreal mirage built of sunbeams and ocean haze.

There was just one patch of shade on her decks—under the bridge—and the governor-general's bulky form occupied that. He was the most substantial object to be seen thereabouts, and his physical discomfort the most obvious. Had the whole spectacle gone up in smoke, one might feel fairly sure that he would have remained calmly puffing his cigar in the face of the catastrophe or fallen with a tremendous splash into the Bay.

A dapper young ensign appeared on deck with a pair of binoculars.

"The captain suggested that I bring these to you," he said politely handing over the glasses. "The *Mary Anna* is just coming in. She's the cable-ship from Famboanga, Captain Bumpey commanding, Lieutenant Millikin in charge of party. You have heard her story from the *presidente*."

The governor-general looked and looked long at the squat little steamer as it slithered past and came to anchor, slowly fitting the glasses to the capacity of his rather bulging eyes. There was the proof of the strange tale. No doubt about it! Chicken-coops fore, chicken-coops aft, chicken-coops on the masts, over the sides and atop the awnings of the trailing *bancas*. A battle had been fought and a treaty made which insured the binding together of old Thunder-and-Lightning's scattered armies in the field, with wires that sputtered timely warnings, or transmitted commands and pleas for reinforcements and supplies. And the deciding factor had been a covey of game-cocks! He put down his glasses, thrilled to the marrow.

"Ensign," he exclaimed ponderously, "there is one game bird on that boat, I want to meet. I'll have him in to dinner this evening. His name is Millikin. I have been wasting too much time on gold braid of late. I want to shake, and shake humbly, the hand of a real second lieutenant."

OLD General Thunder-and-Lightning was confined to his veranda with one of his intermittent attacks of malarial fever, when an orderly from headquarters brought the morning mail. Therefore, it was the gentle hand of Daphne which arranged the various classes of missives into their respective piles; and it was Daphne, herself, who draped her trim figure on the arm of his chair, to watch him skim through them.

The general rip-sawed his way merrily along until he came to one particular slip. Then he stopped, scanned, and plunged so violently in his chair that he almost upset Daphne who happened, just at that moment, to be at her old occupation of powdering her nose.

"Great Scott!" he rumbled. "I'd like to know how he did it!"

"Who did what?" demanded Daphne.

For answer her father thrust up a telegram. It read:

> Cmndg. Gen. Zamboanga, P. I. (Date)
> VIA CABLE.
>
> Telegraphic communication Misamis to Zamboanga resumed this afternoon, 6 P.M. Datto Ming, after brisk action guarantees our lines, pending return by me of 130 hostages. Three casualties. Returning today.
>
> Millikin.

"Why didn't he say more?" groaned the general. "One hundred and thirty hostages. Jumping Jehosaphat! Some lieutenant!"

"I don't see anything so strange in that—considering whom you sent," retorted his daughter.

A little later he came to another message, just off the wire. It turned out to be from no less a personage than the governor-general, bore a Misamis date line, and covered a variety of subjects—going somewhat into details concerning Millikin's adventures. It read in part:

> I desire to commend this young man, and it is also my wish that his commanding officer make known to him, in some suitable manner, the appreciation of his Government of an act of sterling merit, initiative and common-sense reflecting glory on the American arms——

Daphne reading eagerly over her father's shoulder, wriggled impatiently when he threw the message on the table with a gruff cough.

"What else did he say? What else did he

say?" she clamored in his ear. "There was something else!"

"Nothing that interests you. He wants me to recommend an officer to send as attaché to the governor-general and I have nobody to suggest."

His daughter stopped preening herself and gasped in mock astonishment.

"No one to send?" she cried. "Why it's a position that requires finesse, diplomacy and a delightful personality, isn't it? Why—why, send Millikin."

THE MAN HE WAS

By

Ernest Douglas

LUKE BILBY'S statue had been ordered and partly paid for before anybody happened to think that after all he might not be dead. Diligent inquiry failed to disclose any record of his death. The oldest inhabitant of Hassayampa County recalled only that after a long drought had wiped out most of his cattle he turned the remnant over to the bank that had been carrying him, and dropped out of sight. His wife had died a year or two before that and there were no relatives, at least not in our part of the country.

But Hassayampa County just had to put up a statue of somebody and Luke Bilby was its only hero. Yavapai, the county to the north, had just unveiled a handsome monument to Captain Bucky O'Neill, of the Rough Riders, and we "Hassayampers" were grimly determined not to be outdone. A bronze statue, it was agreed, would be a highly appropriate ornament for the plaza of our new court-house.

The Board of Supervisors appointed a Memorial Commission to arrange for the statue and, incidentally, to decide in whose honor it should be erected. No name but that of Luke Bilby was considered. None of our brave and dauntless volunteers in the Spanish War had got any farther than Tampa on the way to Cuba; the big fuss across the Atlantic was still in the future. As the *Evening Chronicle* so happily phrased it:

> Though no citizen of Hassayampa County ever fought, bled and died for his country, our annals of early days tell us that this county once produced a man whose exploits and services to society overshadow those of many a military hero famed in song and story. In honoring Luke Bilby we will be honoring not only that fearless, nervy sheriff who first brought the law to Hassayampa, but all those old pioneers who came into what was then a howling wilderness, braved Indians, wild animals and the unfriendly forces of nature, and made this valley what it is today, the garden spot of the world.

A full account of how Bilby "brought the law to Hassayampa" will be found in the official State history. At one time our county was, with the possible exception of Cochise, the toughest section of the Southwest. Escaped convicts from Eastern and Southern States, crooked gamblers, gunmen, renegades of various kinds and nationalities ran things with a high hand. Murder was one of the principal occupations. Whenever they chose, rustlers drove Hassayampa cattle and horses across the international line into Mexico and sold them.

There was a semblance of a county government but it was in the hands of the lawless element. Every sheriff who had been elected was either an outlaw himself or, to save his skin, he sided in with the outlaws and let them do as they pleased.

Finally things reached such a pass that a few decent stockmen, farmers and mine-owners got together, agreed to lay aside their partisan differences and endeavor to elect a sheriff who would stand for law and order instead of anarchy and disorder. They went to Luke Bilby and asked him to accept the nomination as an independent candidate.

Bilby had already gained a reputation as a man not to be trifled with. Several rustlers had died suddenly while trying to run off his stock and finally, by common consent, his range was left severely alone. For some time he had been almost the only cattleman in the territory who enjoyed this immunity.

"Yes, I'll take it," drawled the dark, short, slender young Texan when the proposition was put to him. "I'm tired of ridin' my range primed for a fight any second. I'd like to raise cows in peace for awhile. Give me a star and I'll make some of these fellers hard to ketch."

To the amazement and rage of the undesirables he was elected. As usual they had put up two candidates of their own, either one of whom could be "handled," and of the three nominees Bilby was high man. Had they been on their guard they could have counted him out, for they had control of the election machinery, but they had not taken his candidacy seriously and when the returns began to come in from the outside precincts it was too late for that kind of skulduggery.

Dark predictions were made that Bilby would never take office, but he did. So many of his supporters gathered at the court-house on the day he took the oath that a plot to kill him and keep the old sheriff in the saddle was hastily dropped.

For nearly a month things went along pretty much as they had before. It began to be whispered about that Bilby had either been bought off or scared out. Almost never was he at his office. Sometimes he would drop in for a short talk with his chief deputy, Charley Faraday, but that was all.

The truth was that he was gathering evidence. He spent his nights riding to every nook and corner of the county, observing and, when possible, listening. He seldom showed himself in the daytime.

One afternoon he walked into the Fashion Saloon on the main street of Mesquite, the county-seat. Bob Frantom was there, taking a drink with several cronies. As Bilby entered Frantom turned and sneered:

"Well, boys, here's our nice little Sunday-school sheriff. Wonder if he's actually gonna take a drink like a real man. Give him a whisky, bartender; it's on me."

Bilby deliberately walked up within five feet of Frantom, looked him in the eye and said with a mildness that was perhaps deceiving:

"We don't want you in Hassayampa County any more, Bob. You'd better git."

"I'd better what?" Frantom gasped in astonishment.

"Light out! Skedaddle! Drift! I'm on to you and your whole gang."

Frantom was quick on the draw but not quite quick enough. His gun discharged into the ceiling as he fell, drilled through the heart.

"I'm sorry I had to do it here," the sheriff apologized to the proprietor. "Been lookin' for 'im quite a while and just spotted 'im comin' in here. Mind if I post up a little notice?"

"Go as far as you like."

Bilby drew from his pocket a list of seven names. With a stub of a pencil he drew a black line through that of Frantom, the one at the top. Then he pinned the paper to the wall and left.

That evening Bilby entered the Fashion once more. The usual noise and bustle were hushed. A group was gathered about his bulletin, reading the names and making comments in low tones.

"Here, what does this mean?" shouted Bart Whipple. "You've got me down here on this list."

"It means you've got till daylight to get started out of the country," the sheriff replied evenly.

"The —— it does!" Whipple blustered, but made no move to draw.

"Just that. You're one of seven ringleaders that Hassayampa can do without. Get you out of the way and I can keep the county pretty decent. Frantom's already gone—do you want to go where he went or head in some other direction?"

Nobody knew just what direction Whipple took but he was never seen in Arizona again.

It was necessary for Bilby to kill one of the other five, but four elected Whipple's course. As the sheriff had forecast, Hassayampa then became a reasonably law-abiding county. There were sporadic outbreaks of gun-fighting, stage-robbing, and rustling, but Bilby suppressed them all with an iron hand and an iron nerve. There was seldom a week when it was not necessary for him to take his life in his hands, but he always came out on top and got his man. He was just a little more determined, just a little quicker, just a little surer, just a little cooler than his adversaries. At the end of his first term he was induced to run again and was reelected practically without opposition. When his second term was completed he voluntarily retired to his cattle-ranch. His work was done. He had brought the law to Hassayampa, and the law has reigned there ever since.

This, then, was the man for whom we were going to put up a statue. A famous sculptor was engaged to model a heroic figure of a frontier sheriff, dressed and armed in the fashion of Bilby's time and seated on a prancing cow-pony.

The Memorial Commission thought that all details had been settled until the sculptor wrote asking for the dates of Bilby's birth and death, that they might be carved upon the pedestal. It was easy enough to look through the county archives and learn the time of his birth, but the year of his death was something else again. It was assumed that he must be dead, for nothing had been heard from him in the twenty years since he left, but no one could say with certainty that he had passed on. Hassayampa County had been neglectful of her only hero, but everybody had had troubles of his own after the big drought.

The propriety of erecting a statue to a man who might conceivably be alive immediately came up, but the matter had gone so far that the order could not be revoked. Anyway, the county would stand in a ridiculous light if it abandoned its widely advertised plan to honor Luke Bilby and the reason for that abandonment became known.

"Bilby's undoubtedly dead and the time of his death doesn't matter," declared Harry Barrett, chairman of the Memorial Commission. "We'll go ahead and think of something else to put on that pedestal besides a bunch of dates."

About that time John Milford, a mining-engineer of Mesquite, was employed to report on some claims away up in the northeast corner of the State, near the Navajo Indian reservation. A stage took him from the railroad to Santa Ynez, a cluster of adobe huts a hundred miles from nowhere, and from there it was necessary to continue his journey on horseback. An insignificant looking old man, proprietor of an insignificant looking livery-stable, supplied him with an insignificant looking horse.

At first Milford did not notice the stableman particularly. The latter was simply a gnarled, bent old party with watery red eyes, plainly one on too intimate terms with the bottle. But a little girl, passing by, addressed him as "Mr. Bilby."

"Your name Bilby?" the engineer asked curiously.

"Yep."

"Ever been down around Mesquite?"

"Yeah, but it was a long time ago. I was sheriff of Hassayampa County four years."

"Good ——! Are you really Luke Bilby? Why, they're putting up a statue of you."

Milford said later that in his surprize he spoke without thinking what the consequences might be. He admitted that on second thought he might have ridden away without telling Bilby of the honors that had come to him, for Hassayampa's hero had certainly gone far downhill and was a mere alcoholic shadow of the man he had been.

"A statue of me? Where's it gonna be? How big'll it be?"

Having let the truth slip out, Milford had to give the details. The old man was pitifully interested, excited.

"I've been tellin' these folks around here that I was quite a man once," he quavered. "Guess they'll believe it now when they hear that a statue of me has been built in the court-house plaza down there at Mesquite. When'd you say it's to be dedicated?"

"About a month from now, if all goes well. It's to be quite an occasion. The governor is to deliver the principal address."

It was with difficulty that Milford tore himself away. When he returned to Santa Ynez a week later he turned the hired horse over to another man.

"Where's Bilby?" he asked.

"Oh, the old fool dreamed that somebody told him his statue was bein' built somewhere, so nothin' would do him but he must sell out and go there to boss the job."

THE arrival of Luke Bilby caused more of a stir in Mesquite than the 1896 earthquake. Dressed in a threadbare gray suit that had apparently served him as pajamas on the trip, he climbed unsteadily out of a smoking-car one day and approached the station agent.

"I'm the feller they're puttin' up a statue of in this town," he stated. "I've come to see if it suits me all right. 'Bout time they was doin' somethin' for us old-timers that chased the Indians and the bad-men out of the country and made it peaceful enough for you tenderfeet to live in. Where can I see that statue?"

The agent looked at him uncertainly and referred him to Harry Barrett. Before he reached Barrett's office he had discovered two of the town's blind pigs and had done business with an itinerant bootlegger. To put it bluntly, Hassayampa's hero was drunker than a fish's bladder.

"I've heard," he said with a bibulous attempt at gravity, "that a statue of me is goin' to be put up in the plaza pretty soon. I've come to look it over and see if it's the kind of statue I'm entitled to. I want a nice, big one, not any little toy. If you're trying' to saw off some half-size statue on me I won't have it. I know my rights."

Barrett treated the ancient wreck as courteously as he could. He made him welcome and showed him the statue, which had just been unloaded and placed in a warehouse until the concrete base on the plaza could be completed.

"——! That ain't no statue of me!" ejaculated Bilby, indignantly shaking his straggly gray beard. "I never looked like that."

"It isn't supposed to be a speaking likeness," Barrett explained. "It's not exactly a statue of you but a memorial to you. You weren't here and we didn't have any photographs to show the sculptor how you looked when you were sheriff, so we just told him to go ahead and use his imagination."

"I'll say he did use his imagination! But I'm here now. You ain't goin' ahead and put up that scarecrow when you can have a statue made that really looks like me and does me justice?"

"Well, I don't know. You see, the statue's all paid for and——"

"But you won't. I won't stand for it. I demand my rights."

The other commissioners sided with the chairman. Again and again it was patiently explained to Bilby that no one had expected the statue to look like him; it was to be typical, not photographic. But he would not be pacified. He went to the blind pigs, the pool-halls and everywhere that he could find listeners, querulously voicing his complaint. Somebody from Yavapai County heard the story and the papers up there printed it with vast embellishments. Soon the whole State was laughing at Hassayampa County and its predicament.

"I wish the old idiot had really been dead," groaned Barrett. "If he was dead he'd be a hero, but alive he's just a nuisance."

On the plaza in front of the court-house steps now stood a shapeless mass swathed about with canvas. It had been placed there on a dark night. The *Evening Chronicle* published practically nothing about the arrangements for the unveiling. The time was announced but that was all.

At the appointed hour a crowd of only moderate size was gathered to witness what had once been planned as the most solemn and elaborate ceremony in the history of Hassayampa County. Luke Bilby sat on a bench close up in front. Two or three acquaintances were doing their best to keep him quiet but without much success.

"It don't look a bit like me," he kept whining. "I won't own it as my statue."

Harry Barrett mounted the platform that had been built especially for the occasion. He began a brief talk by regretting that the governor had found it impossible to attend. Then he went on to say that at first it had been planned to erect a statue in memory of a man who had done more than any other to wrest the county from the grip of a vicious element that had once made the name of Hassayampa a synonym for lawlessness; but circumstances had arisen which made a change advisable. With the consent of the supervisors the commission had caused to be erected a memorial not to one but to all the hardy pioneers who had assisted in the upbuilding of the county.

At a signal ropes were pulled which allowed the canvas wrappings to fall from a beautiful carved granite fountain. A valve was turned somewhere and sprays of leaping water flashed in the afternoon sun.

There was a ripple of applause mixed with laughter.

"It's not such a bad memorial to old

Bilby after all," I heard some one remark. "It spouts and spouts and spouts, just like he does."

Luke sat staring at the fountain with glassy, unbelieving eyes. Long after every one else had left the plaza he sat there, silent and unmoving. No one saw him go. Perhaps he stayed all night.

The next day handbills were distributed about town bearing the simple announcement that in the evening Luke Bilby would speak at the new memorial fountain. Curiosity gave him a larger audience than had attended the unveiling.

Cold sober for the first time since his return to Mesquite, Bilby ascended the platform. Without any preliminaries he began:

"Friends, I got an awful jolt here yesterday and I think it done me a lot of good. I kinda got an idea how two Luke Bilbys stand in this community, the Luke Bilby that used to be sheriff of Hassayampa County, and the whisky-soaked old wreck that stands before you.

"Everybody thinks a heap of the Bilby that was sheriff. The county was goin' to put up a statue in his honor till I come back and spoiled things.

"I've gone downhill pretty far, folks. I don't see myself how it was possible for a man that was the man I used to be to let himself slide the way I did, just let go all holts and give up to the booze. But after my wife died and my cattle starved and I went broke, why I just didn't care what happened to me. I went away from all my old friends that might've helped me if I'd give 'em a chance, and become a drunken bum. I've been a bum twenty years.

"But I can still be just as good a man as I ever was, and here's where I hit the back trail. It'll be a long, hard climb, but I'll make it.

"Friends of Hassayampa County, I'm gonna be a candidate again for sheriff next fall. I've been makin' some inquiries and I've found out that once more you need the kind of a sheriff that Luke Bilby was once and will be again if you'll let 'im.

"In the last two years there's been seven murders in this county; five of the murderers got clean away. A couple of auto stages has been held up; there's been a bank robbery and a train robbery and a lot of other crimes committed. The sheriff's office never got but three of the robbers and most likely they was the wrong men.

"And why is this? It's because the officers go after criminals in automobiles along the main traveled roads. Why, there's one deputy in that court-house that never set on a horse in his whole life! But the robbers and murderers don't get away in motor-cars or railroad trains. They go on foot or horseback and they get away because Hassayampa is still a big thinly settled county not so very far from the Mexican border. You've got tenderfeet in the sheriff's office where you need hard-ridin', hard-shootin' Westerners that can follow a trail that's made by somethin' besides a rubber tire."

Luke had the crowd with him by this time and he talked along the same line for nearly an hour. When he closed a number of persons shook his hand, congratulated him and promised him their support. But the great majority, while admitting his sincerity, did not believe that he could cast off his bad habits and "come back."

The next day Luke began his campaign by buying a horse and starting on a tour of the county, calling first on all the old-timers he had known and endeavoring to enlist them on his side. He did win over many of them, too, and when he filed petitions nominating himself as an independent candidate for sheriff it looked as if he might stand a chance. Since the day of the dedication of the fountain he had not touched liquor. His eyes and skin became clearer, his back straighter. He who had been a doddering old sot was transformed into a healthy, well preserved, leathery, likable old gentleman.

What he said about "automobile officers" made a great impression as his charges were unquestionably true. The sheriff was a soft incompetent surrounded by incompetents. But the memory of what Bilby had been when he came back to Hassayampa County could not be lived down in a few short months. The effect of his campaign was to elect Joe Faraday, one of the regular party nominees and son of the same Charley Faraday that had once been Bilby's chief deputy. Faraday could ride, shoot and track, and knew the county thoroughly. He was just the sort of a man Luke said should be sheriff, and he was a young man. Faraday was elected by a big majority; Bilby ran third.

The first appointment announced by the sheriff-elect was of Luke Bilby to be one of his deputies. That selection met with general approval. Hassayampa was not willing to make Luke its sheriff again, but his manly effort to recover his lost standing had won the respect of every one and Faraday was warmly praised for his action.

On January first the new sheriff took office. Through the rest of that Winter and into the Spring there was a lull in crime. Faraday and his force had little to do. As the days grew warmer I often noticed Bilby sitting in the plaza and gazing at the fountain.

"What do you see, Uncle Luke?" I asked him one day as I passed.

"Some day," he predicted unsmilingly, "they'll tear out that thing and put up a statue of Luke Bilby."

It was late in April when the Blackburn gang wrecked the Zaragoza train and made off with the payroll of the Valentine Copper Company, amounting to thirty thousand dollars. Zaragoza is a little mining-town just over the Tortilla Mountains, forty miles south of Mesquite. As it was without a bank the Valentine mine paid its men in cash, mostly currency, which was shipped out twice a month over a tortuous narrow-gage railroad.

One morning, just after the antiquated engine had toiled painfully to the summit of the range and was chuffing down the other side, it ran into a pile of boulders placed on the track just around one of the numerous curves. The engine and all five of the cars left the track, and the passenger-coach turned completely over. A child was killed and several other persons badly hurt.

The cries of the injured, however, meant nothing to the four masked and heavily armed bandits who stepped from behind some rocks. One proceeded methodically to shoot at the green glass insulators on a telegraph pole, and as each insulator was broken a wire snapped. A second lined up the train crew and any of the passengers who looked as if they might be able to cause trouble. The two others entered the express car almost before it had come to rest at a crazy angle down the embankment. Inside were the messenger and the Valentine paymaster.

As calmly as one would swat a fly the tall, thin fellow who seemed to be in command shot the paymaster through the head. Then he turned to the messenger, who had been thrown to the floor and was just now scrambling to his feet and reaching for his gun.

"Open that safe quick or the same thing'll happen to you."

There was nothing the messenger could do but to obey. With trembling fingers he worked the combination and swung the iron door outward. The bandit leader seized a large leather valise, pried it open and looked inside to make sure that it contained the Valentine money. In the meantime his confederate had collected the dead paymaster's revolver and the messenger's rifle. They emerged swiftly from the car, and the quartet backed up the mountainside to a clump of mahogany shrubs. A moment later the thud of departing hoofs was heard.

"That long feller's Frank Blackburn," growled the engineer. "I was held up by him once before, down on the border."

The telegraph line being cut, a brakeman had to walk back seven miles to a station before word of the holdup could be got to Mesquite. A special train with nurses, doctors and medical supplies was sent out immediately.

No sooner had he been notified than Sheriff Faraday telephoned to the station and arranged for the special to include a car for the horses of himself and his deputies.

"Figgerin' on takin' the trail right from the start, are you, Joe?" asked Luke Bilby as his chief turned from the instrument.

"Why, yes; what else is there to do?"

"Come over here and look at this map."

The short, spare old man almost shoved the blond young giant to the wall.

"Now here's where they held up the train. Course they've hit for Mexico. Now which is the shortest way to the border?"

"Why, the shortest way is almost straight south, down through the Papago Indian country west of Tucson. But they can't go that way. Between the Gila River and Coyote Wells is the dryest part of the whole United States; their horses would die of thirst before they'd gone a hundred miles over that desert. They've got to swing farther to the east or away over west to the Colorado River. No telling what route they'll take, so all we can do is find their trail and hang to it."

"But what if there's water here, and here, and here?"

"There isn't, though. The map doesn't show it."

"There was when I was sheriff, thirty

years ago. I've trailed more'n one gang of rustlers right through that very country. Indians showed me several water-holes and wells that never was on any map, and I found some myself. They must be there yet; things don't change very fast down there and the last few seasons haven't been more'n ordinary dry.

"Now Blackburn and his gang have been operatin' along the border several years and you can bet they knew of that way to Mexico before they ever dared pull anything this far north."

"Maybe that's right, Uncle Luke. If what you say about the water's true it sure is."

"Now look here;" Bilby laid his finger on a dot representing Casa Grande, on the main line of the Southern Pacific. "In about three hours the railroad can lay us down there with our horses. All we've got to do is to cut west till we strike the tracks of them robbers, then follow 'em. There's just a chance we can ketch up with 'em before they get to the border."

"But what if they don't go that way?"

"Wire to all officers this side of Mexico to be on the lookout. That'll block all the other trails. But this is the way they've gone."

Faraday was convinced. Within an hour another special train, consisting of a locomotive and one cattle-car, was bound southward. In the car were nine horses, the sheriff and eight deputies. One of the deputies was Luke Bilby.

"I don't feel that we ought to ask you to go, Uncle Luke," Faraday protested. "It's going to be a long, hard chase and a hard fight if we ever catch up. Maybe you'd better take care of the office and leave this job to us young fellows."

"——!" Bilby spat disgustedly. "I can outride and outshoot and out-track ever' one of you kids and you know it. Besides, I'm the only one that knows that country."

This last argument was unanswerable and Uncle Luke went along.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening when the posse detrained at Casa Grande and headed out through the mesquite scrub west of the town. With Faraday's tacit consent Luke Bilby rode in the lead, his attenuated figure easily erect in the saddle. Shortly after midnight he halted.

"Better not go any farther in the dark," he advised. "Likely to strike the trail any time now. Got to wait till daylight and look for it."

The officers tied their horses to small trees, fed them a little rolled barley and made themselves as comfortable as they could on their saddle-blankets. No one slept much except Luke, who snored peacefully.

"Man in this business has got to learn to sleep whenever he gets a chance," he commented as they were stirring in the first faint roseate blush of the desert dawn.

On and on through dust-covered sagebrush, brownish green grease-wood bushes, low *palo verde* and catclaw-trees, and spiny cacti of a thousand varieties, galloped the pursuers. They saw no animal life except jack-rabbits and a few stray burros. The eyes of their guide seemed to be constantly on the ground fifteen or twenty feet in front.

Just before midday, as they were crossing a wide barren space carpeted with flinty black stones, Luke reined in suddenly and dismounted. His comrades closely examined the surface for tracks but could see nothing.

"There's where they went," he declared, pointing to marks that were wholly invisible to them.

Some of the deputies wanted to argue but Faraday ruled that Luke should have the opportunity to prove that he had indeed found a trail. After they had followed him south a mile or so to softer ground the tracks of four horses were plain to all.

"Their horses was gettin' pretty tired about here," observed Bilby. "So are ours, though, and they're at least four hours ahead of us."

"And they'll travel all night while we'll have to stop and lose more time," groaned the sheriff.

"No, we won't stop. I know now, from the direction these tracks take, which water-hole they're headed for. We'll just hit for that and pick up the trail again there."

Late that evening they came to a stagnant pool in a grove of mesquites. After the weary men and the wearier horses had drunk their fill of the brackish water, and the almost empty canteens had been replenished, Uncle Luke began to strike matches and search for the tracks of the fugitives. Soon he found them.

"Can you be sure which is their next stop?" the sheriff asked.

"They either swung off southeast to Romero's Well or southwest to a little Mexican settlement called Santos Pobres. But they can't get any change of horses at Romero's and they can at Santos Pobres. It's our only chance to get fresh horses, anyway, and if we don't pick up the trail there we can cut across to the well."

SANTOS POBRES was one of the few things that had changed in that changeless land since Bilby's last visit. He remembered it as a village of six or seven families but when the posse arrived, just after daylight, he saw that all but one of the little adobe houses was falling into ruins. At the one dwelling still in fair repair they were joyfully, almost tearfully, welcomed by a ragged, white-bearded but courtly old Mexican.

Yes, other travelers had been that way. Not over an hour since four very rough and, impolite *Americanos* had forced him, under threat of death, to provide them with fresh horses. The spent steeds that they had left behind were even then grazing in his sparse pasture. But the saints be praised that the darkness had prevented them seeing that he had two other horses far, far better than those with which he had parted. He had two very good horses but those that the thieves now rode were mere ponies, old and slow. Yes, he would be very glad to drive his two good animals into the corral and place them at the disposal of the officers.

"Only two of us can go on," Faraday said to his men. "The rest will have to follow when their horses are able to travel. I'll go, of course, for it's my duty to see this thing through. Uncle Luke has earned the right to go with me if he feels equal to it. We'd never have found the trail if it hadn't been for him."

"I'm your man," responded Luke. "I stuck to a trail four days and nights once, without a wink of sleep, and I'm just as good now as I was then."

Fortified by hot coffee, beans and tortillas cooked by the Mexican's shriveled wife, Faraday and Uncle Luke resumed the chase just at sunrise. They hoped to overtake the robbers before noon but the fleeing outlaws got surprizing mileage out of their inferior mounts. It was mid-afternoon when they came upon a little flea-bitten gray lying beside a white brittle-brush, shot through the head.

"Humph!" grunted Luke. "Nag played out and they killed it. Now two of 'em must be ridin' one horse. We've got 'em sure."

Soon they came to another dead pony, than another and another. The fugitives were afoot.

"But the Mexican border's not more'n a dozen miles off," remarked Bilby. "They figger they can get across on foot and be safe, but they don't know anybody's followin' 'em."

Soon the boot-tracks turned from the level desert and led up a steep butte of coal-black malpai rock spotted with scrubby mesquite and catclaw-bushes, clumps of prickly pear and other desert growth. This fact meant nothing to Faraday, who was on his first man-hunt, but Luke immediately perceived its significance.

"They've sighted us and they're goin' to make their stand on this hill," he asserted. "Else they'd never have left the easy goin'."

Cautiously they skirted the butte but without finding any tracks descending the opposite side. Their quarry must be hidden somewhere near the top.

"What had we better do now, Uncle Luke?" Faraday asked uncertainly as they stopped in the shadow of a great boulder.

"First of all we'd better leave the horses here. Then we've got to locate them fellers before dark or they'll get away sure. It means takin' some chances of gettin' plugged, but there's no other way."

They tied the horses and took their revolvers from the scabbards.

"Now watch me, then follow," ordered Luke.

The old man charged up the hillside perhaps twenty yards, then dropped prone behind a squawberry-bush and fired once toward the summit. His shot brought no reply. Faraday drew a long breath, then broke from cover and swiftly joined his deputy, now become his commander.

"Might shoot any place you think they could have stopped," Luke suggested. "Here goes again."

Six or seven times they moved from one bit of cover to another before a fusillade of shots from some cactus near the peak disclosed the position of the enemy.

"Umph-humph!" Bilby grunted with vast satisfaction. "Knew we'd draw their fire before we got close enough to be in danger."

"But Uncle Luke, we can't rush 'em,"

protested Faraday. "They're sure to pot us before we ever catch sight of 'em."

"I know that. Now you do as I tell you. At the next shot I fall. You run out and pick me up and drag me back of that ledge over there."

Again Luke hopped out into the open. Another storm of bullets swept down the hill. Luke threw up both hands and crumpled to the earth. An instant later Faraday threw the veteran's apparently limp form over his shoulder and dodged behind a rib of white quartz that projected through the malpai.

"Fooled 'em sure," Luke exulted. "Now you go back and get them rifles we dropped. Then you stay right here and keep our friends smoked up while I take 'em from behind."

Faraday began to understand the plan when he saw Luke, firmly grasping his revolver in one hand, creep along to the southward in the concealment of the ledge. Now and then sending a bullet whining upward, he watched Luke closely until he disappeared into a water-course two hundred yards away.

"The nervy old cuss!" Faraday muttered. "Maybe I oughtn't to let him risk it but it would break his heart if I called him back. Probably he wouldn't come anyway."

For an hour Faraday lay there, exchanging leaden compliments with the unseen foe. His hand began to shake, not with fear but because of anxiety over what might be happening to Bilby.

Then, all at once, the desultory firing of the desperadoes became rapid. No bullets pinged against the ledge so Faraday knew that they were shooting in the other direction. Luke, whom they had thought dead or at least *hors de combat*, had surprized them from the rear and attacked them single-handed.

Uncertain what to do, the sheriff leaped to his feet. Then, throwing caution to the winds, he started running straight up the hillside. He scarcely realized when the firing ceased.

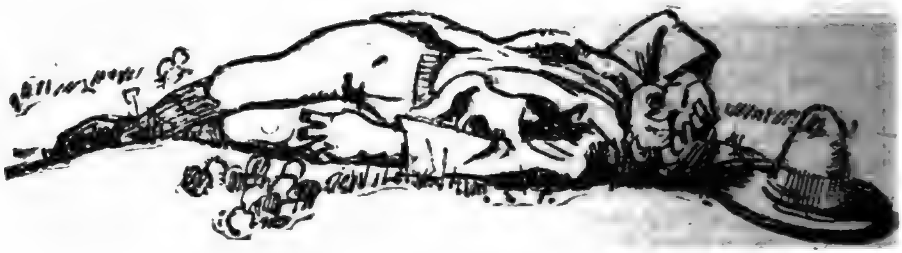
When Faraday, panting and stumbling, reached the slightly flattened crest of the butte, the sun was just sinking in a cauldron of orange flame. There he found his deputy, lying face downward over a rock. Before him, not over fifteen feet away, were four bandits, all dead. Frank Blackburn's stiffening hand still clutched the handle of the money-filled valise that he had carried away from the safe of the express car.

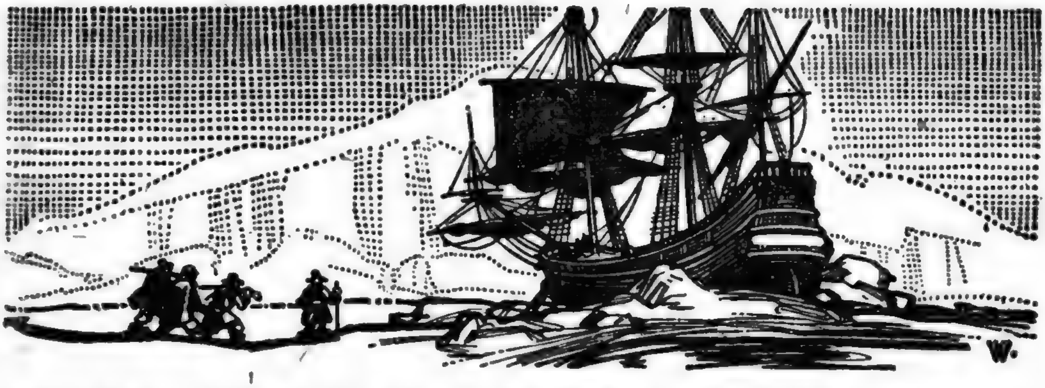
Faraday turned Luke over. The faded blue eyes fluttered open.

"Tell 'em—tell 'em—that I showed I was just as good a man as I ever was."

Then he died.

Another statue has been ordered for the court-house plaza at Mesquite. It will be a close likeness of Luke Bilby.





THE STAR GOES NORTH

A Complete Novelette by H. Bedford-Jones

Author of "The Star of Dreams," "Up the China Sea," etc.

ALTHOUGH it was late August and the wide expanse of Hudson Bay was now open water, all the Winter's freeze was thrust here at the straits for exit, and not a ship had entered. No ship could fight this ice until the jam burst. The Northland was laying a cruel trap, and many a stout seaman would fall into it this Summer of 1697.

Summer? Here at the straits the word was horrible mockery. Here nothing was in sight save ice and fog; the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth were all congealed in to dead grayness. There was not even the blue shimmer of sun-struck ice. Everything was unreal. Even the ear was assailed by a low, never-ceasing groan, which now rose into a crescendo of unearthly shrieks and crashes and again rolled in dim reverberant thunders that were felt rather than heard; this came from the ice—floes and small bergs and crushed mountains hanging at crazy angles—all hurled into an inchoate mass by the tremendous urge of the swollen bay waters trying to crowd through the narrow straits to the sea.

In the air was that bitter and penetrating chill which comes of melting ice—a chill mocking at furs, thrusting into the very heart and entrails of the two men who appeared and vanished again, crawling across that drear expanse. To the northwest, though she was hidden among the ice masses, the position of the *North Star* was marked by a thread of smoke two miles away; even this smoke looked cold and shivery as it wound shuddering into the sky. To east and south rose the steep and awful cliffs of the strait and Cape Digge.

They ran, ice-dripping, into heaven and melted in the horizon fog, cold barriers set two thousand feet in air to keep the inland sea cloaked in thin mist and bitter chill. Digge's Island was a dim blur to the northeast. To west and south were grinding, crushing ice-pans. Overhead was dun sunlight drowned in high fog—a ghastly and unearthly fog which threatened to close down again in an hour or two and add its clammy fingers to the merciless grip of the ice.

"The shot came from about here," called Crawford.

He paused on a rounded hummock of ice to sweep the surrounding surface with his gaze. From his left, where Frontin was toiling among some rough masses of upflung floes, broke a sudden sharp cry:

"Here we are, cap'n! Name of the saints—come and look!"

Turning, Crawford hastened to join his lieutenant, scrambling over pinnacles and avoiding pools of melted water. Frontin was poised on a ridge of broken masses, and now uttered a curt comment:

"No hurry. He's dead."

Cursing the bitter chill and the slushy ice underfoot, Crawford climbed up beside this tall and saturnine companion of his, this Frontin of the cynical air and the warm heart. Once Frontin had been a gentleman of France, an officer in the royal navy, before he became a buccaneer and a nameless rover.

Reaching the ridge, Crawford found himself gazing down at a hollow, an ice-pan closed in by crushed pinnacles all around, like an open glade in a forest. Below the two men, at the near side of this hollow, lay the outstretched shape of a great white bear, the top of its head blown away—and beside this the motionless figure of a man, apparently that of an Eskimo, lying across a gun.

"These Eskimos have no fusils and don't use powder," said Crawford. Despite his astonishment, his brain was swiftly at work. "Yet if he's white—where could he have come from? Certainly no ship has been ahead of us; we know that much. One might have followed us into the straits——"

Frontin waved his hand at the ice around him.

"One or a dozen. We ha' been carried in the ice for weeks, up one channel and down another—ah! I see that heaven has declared me a liar!"

He moved suddenly.

"The man is not dead after all. Come!"

The two clambered down, leaping and sliding into the hollow where the ice was pooled with blood. Frontin turned the man over, lifted head to lap, tenderly soothed the poor hurt and disemboweled thing that had been human before the great claws of the bear ripped so deep and far. The man's eyelids fluttered open, and his vacant gaze fell upon Crawford. He spoke feebly in English:

"The smoke—the smoke! It is a sure sign. I tell you, come and slay them quickly—no hesitation, no parley! No quarter to man, woman or child. English or French, slay them or they will kill us all. That smoke means a ship. I—I—ah! You—you are not Moses Deakin! Who are you?"

Intelligence leaped into the eyes, with a last flicker of dying fires.

"Where did you come from?" demanded Crawford swiftly, imperatively. "Your ship? Where is she?"

"Blast you to —— and sink you lower!" came the response. "Ho, Moses—Moses Deakin! No quarter to them——"

That was all, and the hurt thing was gone.

Now there fell silence upon the two men—silence of dread wondering and slow comprehension. Frontin rose, turned his dark and glittering gaze upon the empty white desert surrounding them; his hawk-nose saturnine visage was wrinkled in perplexity. Crawford began to stuff tobacco into an Indian pipe and stared down at the dead man, his wide and heavy-lidded eyes veiled thoughtfully. Frost and bleak winds had darkened the thin lines of nose and cheek and chin, only to intensify their hard determination.

Whence had this man come? So far as Crawford knew or had been able to glean from Eskimos, no other ships had come through the roaring turmoil of the straits. For weeks his bark, the *North Star*, had been carried back and forth and roundabout in the grip of ice and fog and currents, now out almost to open water, now back in the straits with the drift. Yet the presence of this man showed that some other ship surely must be at hand, and any other ship spelled peril of the utmost.

Here in the bitter North, as on the golden main to the south, the only law was that of gun and knife. During a generation and more, the English, French and Bostonnais had disputed for possession of Hudson's great bay and its beaver trade. A year previously the English Company of Adventurers had swept the French from the bay posts; what would happen this year or the next, no man could predict. The Iroquois war-whoop had resounded from the dark pines these ten years, meeting at the apex of a great overland triangle the scalp-yell of the Sioux. The heroic Danish colony had perished in horror long years ago. Fur pirates and freebooters slipped in through the straits and out again before the ice formed. Here, as on the main, only the fittest could survive. The conquered met with no quarter—whether from man or from nature.

"Queer words, cap'n," said Frontin presently. "He was repeating something that he had already said. He must have seen our smoke. Hm! Then he would not have shot the bear unless forced to it. He was scouting us, eh? The bear attacked him, and they killed each other——"

"Aye," said Crawford, opening his fire-bag.

"No quarter, said he," went on Frontin. "Death of my life! Where did he come from then? There is nothing in sight. His ship may be hidden, like ours; that name of Moses Deakin! A singular name. Have ye ever heard it before?"

"Aye," said Crawford again.

Frontin turned and gazed curiously at him, while he fumbled with flint and steel. Presently he had the tinder aglow—then, abruptly, he pinched it out. A sudden blaze swept into his blue eyes. He thrust pipe and bag away in haste.

"I have it—quick, now!" he exclaimed sharply. "Two men were out together, even as we are. Moses Deakin left this man, started back to their ship. He'll have heard the gun-shot and will return here to see what it means. Back, out of sight! It's our chance to catch him, Frontin—and if we catch Moses Deakin we have the best prize in the bay. Back, back! Prime your gun afresh and wait for him!"

Frontin paused not to reason why, but slid away and vanished among the hummocks above. Crawford stooped over the dead man and explored beneath the torn, frozen-red garments. His hand came away with a crinkle of paper, and he gave the document one sharp look that widened his eyes. Then he hastily turned the body over, face down, as it had first lain, and followed his lieutenant into hiding. No footsteps had left any trace on the ice; here, to all appearance, was death and nothing else.

Crouched beside Frontin among the hummocks, Crawford briefly told what he knew of this Moses Deakin.

"A Boston fur-pirate; I heard queer tales of him both in New York and Boston. They say he's a great, hard, cold beast who sees visions, has dealings with the foul fiend and is cruel as any Mohawk. The story goes that he has a post of his own somewhere on the bay; he abandons it in Winter, sneaks in and gets his furs when the straits open, and goes again swiftly. An agent among the Indians does the trading for him and has the furs ready. This is rumor, of course, but he's a reality. Either the French or the English would blow him out of the water if they could catch him."

"We care nothing for furs," said Frontin. "Why, then, is he of value to us?"

"Because he knows the bay as no other man does—every river and shallow and island, they say. That's how he eludes capture. You comprehend now? If we catch him, we find——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Frontin. "The passage to the south sea!"

"If it exists, as pilots declare, he'll know of it."

It was to seek this passage that Crawford had come into the bay.

The two men waited motionless and silent; from their position no moving object could be seen, but this meant little. Except from some high elevation, a man or a dozen men could not be sighted among the heaped-up masses of ice.

Of a sudden, Frontin touched Crawford's elbow. Among the opposite crags of ice, across the hollow, appeared a moving shape that came abruptly into full view and paused to look down upon the scene of death. A great and grim man was this, whose entire bearing and aspect conveyed a singular impression of iron resolution and dominance.

A fur cap covered his head. Merging with the shaggy fur, an immense beard of grizzled black swept across his lower face and hung in two bushy prongs over his barrel of a chest. Between cap and beard were visible a massive, wide-nostriled nose and two most remarkable eyes. They were deeply set and far apart, beneath shaggy, grizzled brows; they were extremely large, insolent, commanding, of a light and steely gray which contrasted strongly with the mass of dark hair. Across his shoulder lay a fusil, which he now suddenly lifted and discharged in the air.

"A signal!" breathed Frontin. "Now is our time——"

"No—no!" denied Crawford, his low word desperately urgent. "Look! We are lost——"

The gun-shot was answered by a burst of calls and shouts, so unexpected and so close that both men started. At once other men came into view, half a dozen of them, along the opposite ridge of ice. In a flash, Crawford had perceived his frightful error of calculation; the dead man had been companioned, not by Deakin alone, but by all these men!

Crawford met the situation characteristically. Setting his mouth to Frontin's ear, ignoring the group who were swiftly descending toward the bodies of bear and man, he spoke rapidly:

"Stay hidden, keep my gun. Be ready for anything. If I go with them, watch and get a bearing on the direction of their ship. Keep the smoke-flare going from the bark. You comprehend? They know all about us, we know nothing about them. Here—take care of this paper."

Into Frontin's hand he thrust the paper he had taken from the dead man; then he rose and strode forward. He was apparently unarmed, though beneath his coat were pistol and knife and tomahawk.

As Crawford came thus into their sight, descending from the icy ridge to the hollow, the group of men stared at him for half a minute in gaping amazement. Then their guns came up, but he spoke with a cool assurance that gave them pause.

"Careful, Cap'n Deakin, careful! You're outnumbered and have stumbled into a very neat ambuscade. Frontin, order one of the men to fire in the air, that the good Moses may realize his position.

"Aye, cap'n," responded the voice of Frontin, then came the roar of a fusil in air.

ASTOUNDED by the appearance of Crawford, caught huddled there in the hollow and surrounded as they thought, by hidden enemies, the half-dozen Boston men dared not move. They crowded behind Moses Deakin, who was measuring Crawford with his bold, hard gaze. Startled though he was, Deakin was unafraid.

"Well?" he demanded truculently. "Who the —— may you be, that you know my name?"

Crawford surveyed him with a slight, whimsical smile, suiting action to utterance.

"My dear Deakin," he responded calmly, "we ought to know you, since we've had men posted around your ship since last night! If we had borne you any ill-will, we might have taken that craft of yours a dozen times over. But to what end? I'm bringing you a belt of white wampum and a peace talk, as the redskins say. Agree to a truce, and I'll go back to your ship with you and we'll have a friendly discussion."

"Your name?" growled Deakin, obviously taken all aback by this information.

"Crawford."

"Blood and wounds! Not Hal Crawford, the pirate?" exclaimed Deakin, while his men stared and gaped at the name.

"Pirate in name," said Crawford, "though in fact nothing of the sort. Come! What say you—peace or war? Pass your word, and I'll accept it."

Deakin did not hesitate—was not the sort to hesitate when trapped. He put out his hand and took that of Crawford in a mighty grip. He answered with apparent heartiness, yet with ruthless treachery thinly-veiled in those domineering eyes of his.

"Aye!" he said. "Come aboard with us, Crawford; peace it is. To the ship, lads, and out o' this! The flood-tide'll be lifting this accursed ice. Leave the corpse where it is."

Crawford turned and raised his voice:

"Frontin! Take the men back to the ship and signal in the others. If I do not return in a couple of hours, come over the ice and hang Moses Deakin and all his men with him."

"Aye, cap'n," returned the voice of Frontin.

Deakin showed huge, yellow teeth through his beard at this threat, then rumbled out a laugh and turned.

He set off for the southeast with Crawford beside him, while the men draggled after and cast frightened looks at the desolate expanse around them, which now was cracking and groaning and heaving from the rise of water below. No word was spoken. Since the hour lay close upon noon, Crawford guessed that Moses Deakin and his men were hungry.

So far, so good, he reflected as he trod the slippery ice, climbing and sliding and leaping cracks in the way. Whether he could carry through the bluff was of no great consequence; he had little doubt of a good issue. He dared not betray himself by asking any questions, so he accompanied Deakin in silence until he made out a tracery of spars ahead. Presently he found that the fur-pirate lay barely three miles away from the *North Star*, in under the frowning cliffs of the mainland and close to the great cape itself.

Closer approach showed the Boston ship to be a large square-rigged corvette carrying three heavy guns to a side, and by name the *Albemarle*. Crawford grimaced as he thought of his little bark and the men aboard her, six English and eight Irishmen escaped from slavery; for he saw that Deakin had nearly thirty men aboard his rover. Then they were up the side of the ice-gripped corvette, and Crawford followed his host aft and to the main cabin below. A wild, shaggy crew of men they were who stared at him, and scurvy had touched some of them with hideous hand.

In the cabin, Crawford seated himself along with Deakin, and a boy fetched them pannikins of food and mugs of grog. An officer entered and asked for orders; Deakin gave them crisply, curtly, and dipped fingers in pannikin again. Crawford saw that while this man was uncouth as any bear, he yet possessed strange depths of bravery and treachery and perhaps madness; in all verity an animal with the brain of a man.

"And now to talk!"

Deakin swigged his rum, accepted the tobacco Crawford offered, and made a light.

"What force have ye? Half down with scurvy, I'll warrant."

"Force enough," said Crawford easily, "and not a touch of scurvy."

"That's a lie," came the blunt response.

Crawford's blue eyes narrowed.

"Softly, Moses Deakin! One such word is enough. Any more of it and I'll put steel into you! Guard your tongue better. Who was that man the bear had mangled?"

"My lieutenant," Deakin gazed unwinkingly at his visitor. In his bold stare lay a more deadly menace than that which Crawford had just put into words. "Had been three year with me. What ship have ye got?"

"A bark," Crawford put the light to his pipe and puffed. "I'm no pirate, as ye call me. I've no interest in furs or gain. I'm looking for the place that's over the horizon, and I've come seeking help from you."

The shaggy brows drew down.

"What place?"

"Whatever may be there!"

Crawford put one hand inside coat and shirt, and drew out a jewel upon its thong. Of raw gold it was, set with emeralds, few of them good stones; it was of slight intrinsic value, perhaps, yet its artistry held a peculiar charm.

"The star, Cap'n Deakin—my star of dreams! There is a symbol for you. I follow it. Call it a madman's fancy, if you like; I seek some far place beyond the horizon, for freedom, for action, for a chance to be myself unhampered! I'm sick of the struggle for place and pelf and power—I want a fresher world. I have goods and provisions and gold aboard the bark; there is naught I need to rob from other men. If others—mark it well!—think to rob me, I have teeth and can use 'em."

"Well, others have teeth, for that matter," said Moses Deakin, a slight narrowing to those big eyes of his as Crawford thrust the star out of sight again. "Blood and wounds! How d'ye expect me to believe such a tale, man? Who comes into these seas but for furs?"

"I do, for one," was the cool response. "Where I go matters not, so long as I go freely. You have reason—use it! If I wanted loot, what easier than to come at you? Then to seek that hidden trading-post of yours and loot it? But nonsense; we have no quarrel. Is it true, as men say, that from the northwest of this bay leads a passage to the south sea? That is what I want to know of you."

Deakin frowned upon his questioner. In his eyes lay a gleam of suspicion and distrust which Crawford did not like.

"Not to my knowledge," he made slow answer. "And I should know if any man does. Last year the French ships drove me far up to the nor'west, and I ha' talked much with Injuns, and this talk of a passage is all folly."

Crawford puffed in frowning silence, but after a minute Deakin continued with an abrupt change of topic:

"What's to hinder me keeping you here while my men go take your ship? There's two hundred pound for you in Boston, dead or alive. You ha' gold aboard, and supplies that are better than gold in these quarters. What's to hinder, eh?"

Crawford emitted a thin cloud of smoke, and his thin lips twitched sardonically.

"Try it and see. What's two hundred pound and the loot of a bark, as against a Winter's stock of furs? A poor gamble."

Deakin's teeth shone through his beard, and his eyes smoldered darkly.

"I'll swallow no tale of a south sea passage. Hm! Ye've not been in the bay before, neither. But Frontin, the man with ye—your lieutenant, eh? Aye, I've heard of him. French pirate. That explains it well enough."

"Explains what?" queried Crawford, somewhat astonished by the heavy ruminations.

"Your bein' here. No doubt Frontin caught some thread o' the tale. The French Company's men heard it from the redskins, likely. And you're just fool enough to go look into it. You and your star—honest enough in that folly, too! Oh, I read you aright, Crawford; you have heard the tale, but so have I. Ye did wrong to let me see that star."

"What d'you mean?" Crawford was suddenly alert, as the dog who scents unseen game. "Eh? What tale?"

"Bah! The Star Woman, o' course."

With an air of irritated finality, as if the matter were settled, Deakin lifted his mug and drained it. He banged down the pewter, licked his hairy lips, and grunted:

"Ay, the Star Woman. Little you know of her, thou I've seen her; if not in the flesh, then otherwise. No white man has seen her in the flesh, and few enough of the redskin dogs; and it's west and south you'll have to go to look, not nor'west. Neither you nor I will do much looking in that direction, whilst French and English are there! Dost know there's a host of ships behind us in the straits, ice-locked?"

"Ships?" repeated Crawford, wondering at this talk of a Star Woman, but catching swiftly at the more essential news. "How d'you know?"

"I saw them, as I saw the Star Woman—in visions. French ships of the line, English frigates—bah! Come up on deck and talk in the open air. Plague on this stuffy cabin!"

Moses Deakin shoved back his chair and rose. Crawford followed suit and accompanied him to the ladder, thinking that there must be some madness in the man's brain. At the ladder, Deakin motioned him to mount.

Then, as Crawford's back was turned, Moses Deakin threw up his arm and struck. The blow, sharp and light but deadly as an arrow, drove home to the base of the brain. Crawford fell against the ladder, then rolled to the deck, paralyzed.

II

WHEN Frontin returned to his own ship that afternoon, he returned alone; and if there was dismay in his own heart, he brought stark consternation to the hearts of those aboard her.

It was a strange company that grouped around him, hearing the tale he spat out between bites of food. Here were six Englishmen, hardy rascals who cared little what took place so they never saw an English gaol again, and who followed Hal Crawford with blind infatuation. All of them had been in these seas before, either as beaver pirates or as fur-company men. With the eight Irishmen the case was different. These followed Crawford partly because he himself was Irish and had rescued them from slavery in Newfoundland; but more largely because Sir Phelim Burkes Murtha was his friend and follower, they loved Burke. They were all fine seamen, active islanders of the Sea Burkes.

"I sighted their ship and got a bearing on her," concluded Frontin. "Can lea[illegible] there in the dark, for she's fast in shore ice—but what use? I saw that big bear of a man come up from below alone, roar at his men, and shake his fist toward us. The cap'n is trapped and gone."

A chorus of low oaths ran around the group, but Sir Phelim stared incredulously. Old friend and companion-in-arms of Crawford, Sir Phelim Burke was warped by slavery, aged beyond his years, his limbs broken, a brand seared into his forehead. He too sought to flee the world which had so sorely used him, yet the spirit flamed in his hurt body and at times it leaped into a wild blaze of impulsive action. Now he swiftly put a hand under his coat and slipped out a pistol, and held it cocked at the head of Frontin.

"Up with you!" he cried, his eyes glittering. "What use, ye say? Little I thought you a coward and worse! But now you'll lead us, and——"

Frontin looked into the pistol, then into the eyes of Sir Phelim, and a grin swept across his bitter, saturnine countenance. It was a grimace of pain, not a grin of mirth.

"Lead you? Ay, in good time. D'ye not see that the heart is heavy in me? Put away the pistol. You should know me better, Sir Phelim."

Realizing the truth of this, Sir Phelim obeyed; he uttered a low groan, and turned to stare drearily at the fog which clamped them in. They were on the main-deck since there was no frost in the air, only the dread chill of melting ice.

The *North Star*, rigged in the fashion which another twenty years was to know as "schooner," lay grappled to a small berg. She was a new ship of English oak, and apparently the ice-battering had not so much as started a butt in her. Yet Frontin as he climbed aboard her, had seen something which started his brain to frantic work.

Fog had come down within the past half hour—a heavy, cloaking mist that lay all about them like an evil thing, and through it penetrated the groaning of the ice; even the berg beside them was filled with long shudderings and heavings and queer noises.

The ice was all in movement, as it moved every day at high-water, now back and now forth, in a slow and regular motion with the trend of shore-currents and ice-drift. Blocked by the huge jam across the mouth of the straits, the outer masses were gradually disintegrating.

"Say the word, Master Frontin," spoke up one of the six Englishmen, "and we be with ye. We'll not let the cap'n bide on yon ship without a fight."

Frontin gave him a bleak look.

"Go aloft, Dickon, and keep sharp watch. The fog has come down low, and up there it thins quickly. Watch the direction of the drift closely."

Dickon departed, and Frontin sent the other men to sleep and rest. Sir Phelim dully repeated the order to the Irish, who could speak little English. Frontin and Sir Phelim remained alone.

"What hope?" said Burke despairingly. "Even if Crawford is not dead, how can we help? I understand your meaning better now, Frontin. The ice is moving us, and the fog has settled down. We cannot find that accursed ship now."

"I can find her in ——," said Frontin.

Then he drained a mug of wine, wiped his lips, and settled back against the rail. When he had a tinder-match alight, Frontin set it to his pipe and puffed comfortably.

"The cap'n is not dead, Sir Phelim, depend upon it! I think that he gave this Moses Deakin too large a tale—perhaps frightened the Bostonnais. So Deakin caught him off guard and clapped him in irons. Why? Perhaps to serve as a hostage. That order to me, bidding me come over and hang Deakin unless the cap'n went free, perhaps frightened the man; Deakin fears we may come and do it anyhow."

"Then you propose——"

"To do it."

Burke regarded him steadily.

"How can you find that ship again?"

"How?" Frontin smiled his thin, sardonic smile. "We have calculated the drift each day. The Bostonnais is inside the drift by the shore-ice, and will not move until all this ice breaks up or goes into the strait. There is no hurry. Undoubtedly, this Deakin will set out a little later to scout our ship and discover her strength and position. Sir Phelim, do you believe in omens?"

Burke regarded him now with some uneasiness. There was about this Frenchman, whose affection for Crawford was beyond words, something deep and terrible; his manner held a gloomy exultation. Burke, who was in a despondent mood, was ready to see misfortune in this or in anything.

"Omens? Well, one never knows—but you spoke of Deakin scouting our ship!"

"Yes. He will do it. He can find her."

"But he will discover all our weakness!"

Frontin snapped his fingers.

"Exactly. Now let us return to our omens. For example, that star which the cap'n wears, and which he calls the Star of Dreams! You believe in it?"

Sir Phelim smiled a sad and twisted smile.

"I believe in his belief, my dear Frontin. He and you and I—we follow that star out of the world, over the horizon. An omen of happiness that we have never found, perhaps. It has led us here to this desolate spot. Is that an omen? Then all this —— and ice-bound Northland is an omen. Has this fog a father? Out of whose womb came this ice, and who has gendered the hoary frost of heaven?"

"We can dispense with poetry, which has a suspiciously Biblical sound," said Frontin drily. "Thank heaven I am no Irishman, to make misfortunes into poetry! Instead, I make them into a ladder."

Sir Phelim laughed.

"Poet yourself, dark man! Well, why all this talk of omens and the star that we have followed?"

"Because I propose to follow it aboard that Bostonnais."

For a moment Burke did not get the full meaning of these words until something in the tone, in the glinting dark eyes of Frontin gave him enlightenment. Then he started.

"Impossible! That were rank madness——"

Frontin lifted a hand, made an imperturbable gesture.

"Listen!"

The trembling grind of the crushing floes and bergs had never ceased. But listening, Sir Phelim gradually detected a new and different sound—a strange sound that blanched his weathered cheeks and widened his eyes in horrified comprehension. This sound was a slow and relentless groan which emanated from the very heart of the ship herself. By some converging pressure, her timbers were being squeezed and ground between floes and berg; a fraction of an inch at a time, she was being crushed.

"We have a choice," said Frontin coolly, when he saw that the other understood. "We may stay here and fight, blast holes in the ice, open a channel—and abandon the cap'n. We cannot rescue both him and the ship, for lack of men."

"But you would leave her, all that is in her——"

"Follow the star!" Frontin uttered a short, hard laugh. "Ay, abandon her and all in her! Take that other ship——"

"Man, are you mad?" broke out Sir Phelim earnestly. "You have gold aboard here, your own gold, and we cannot carry it over the ice!"

"The devil gave the gold, let him take it again."

Frontin waved his pipe carelessly.

"The Star of Dreams has gone aboard another ship, and we follow; that is all. Now to return to first premises. That fur-pirate lies grappled to a long hummock—a long, low berg. My scheme is to post six men with extra guns upon the flanks of that berg, above her decks. With the rest, we attack. If we fail to surprize her, the six on the berg will open fire on her decks while we come in with pistols. You comprehend? They outnumber us, but they have no star."

Burke stared at him thoughtfully.

"Yet the ice is moving! There will be channels between here and the shore-ice."

"We shall take the small boat with us. Listen! We are moving more rapidly. All the ice outside here is moving. Perhaps we have reached the end of this abominable delay! Tonight we shall either be free or the ice will close down once more, as it has done so often before. However, I can find that corvette."

They were silent. That horrible squeezing groan of wrenched oak was no longer to be heard. Perhaps the pressure on the bark was relieved, perhaps the sound was drowned in the increasing tumult from the fog-wrapped ice around. The tumult had become a cacaphony of hideous noises. The ice, out there in the fog, was heaving up in great masses and falling again, bursting into fragments, sliding and rending and crashing.

A hasty call from aloft brought Frontin to his feet. He darted into the cabin for a spy-glass, then mounted the rigging.

Sir Phelim Burke remained where he was, lost in thought and surmise. He knew that Frontin had brought aboard the bark a great mass of gold—was the Frenchman ready to give it up, to abandon it utterly? That bespoke a greater love for Crawford than Burke had visioned in the man, who was outwardly so bitter and cynical.

"—— the ice! It is madness, madness manifold!"

Sir Phelim threw out his hands, gripped the rail hard in despair, as he stared at the fog.

"Heart of the world gone wrong, and broken men adrift who pin faith to a star and drive across the horizon, blindly! Well, I think that this is not the first time men have trailed a star—but they were wise men. We are fools, Hal Crawford, and we love you—and are fools."

Up above, Frontin was standing beside the pointing Dickon, incredulity in his face as he hurriedly focused his glass. The sullen grinding and crashing of the ice had come to a sudden pause, and the drift had ceased. That drift had been to the northward. The fog, which was here little more than ice-steam, clung closely and did not lift—up above there was even a faint stirring of breeze, which helped to dissipate the upper layers of mist and stirred it all into yeasty heavings.

From the masthead, Frontin could make out the line of coast, or rather the cape, and calculated that the bark had drifted two or three miles farther back toward the straits. There in the north the fog was thicker and heavier, a massive bank of grayness, now swirling away, now parting for a moment, now abruptly closing again, but all the while steadily drawing down upon the bark.

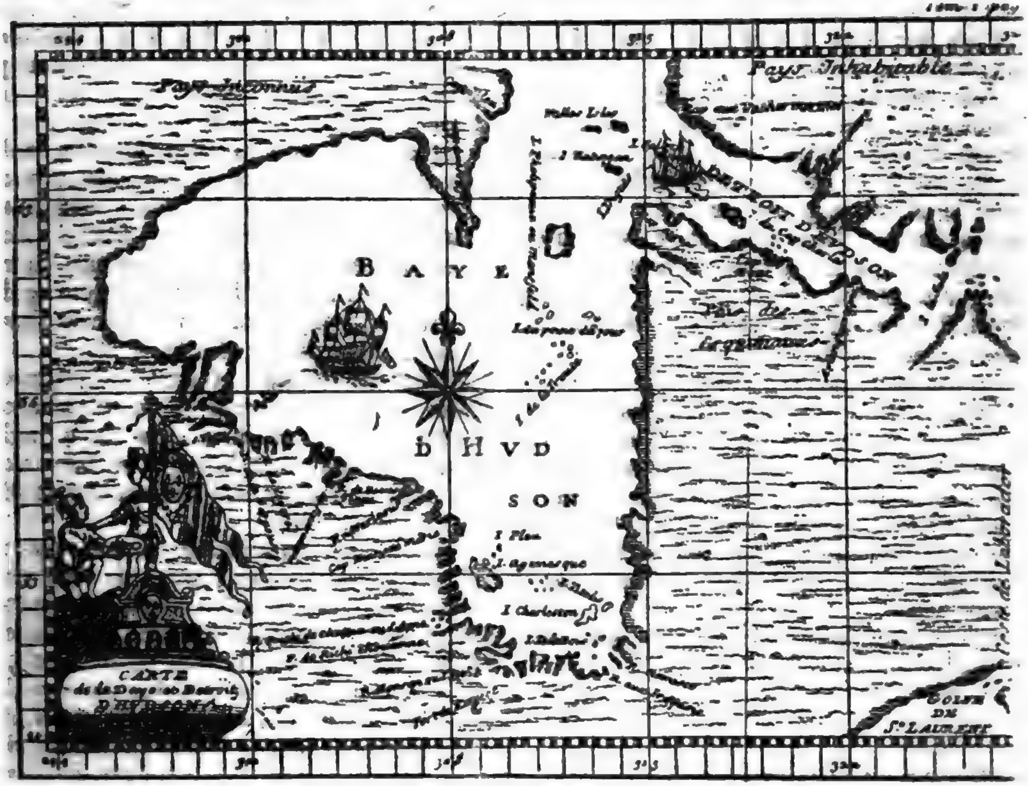
Frontin waited for another such shifting, his glass fastened toward the end of the cape. The gray wall parted abruptly—parted to disclose a tiny, fluttering bit of color set in its midst. Nothing else was to be seen save this scrap of color; the flag of England, set apparently in the sky. Then a sudden shrill cry burst from Dickon:

"Rot me—look, master! Off to larboard! Look quick!"

Frontin swung around, and from his lips broke a low word. A great eddy of the moving fog-bank had blown an open lane—a perfect channel through the mist, walled on either hand. Looking down this lane, as if the scene had been set there for his sight by some whimsy of the invisible fingers which manipulated ice and fog and sea, Frontin had one swift glimpse of a towering frigate, all sail set, not three miles distant—and from her stern drooping the white flag of France! Even as he looked, the fog closed down again and she was gone like a vision. The English flag, over by the cape, had also vanished.

Frontin closed his glass and descended to the deck, a touch of color in his cheeks, his dark eyes glowing. He came to Sir Phelim and clapped the latter on the shoulder.

"Eh?" The Irishman was startled by his appearance. "What's happened?"



"It's what is about to happen!" cried out Frontin, a joyous ring in his voice. "Death of my life—who, think you, is out there in the fog?"

"Crawford?"

"No—Iberville! His fleet must have come through the straits after us. I saw the *Profound* lying out yonder not a league distant; I ought to know the old brute of a ship, since I once——"

Here Frontin checked himself and bit his lip, then continued more carefully:

"She has been cruising off the St. Lawrence for two years with Iberville and raiding Acadia. The rest of the fleet must be in the straits. And off the cape is an English ship. Come! While the lions fight, the jackals may seize the bone. To work! If we were sure of heaven, we might accept fate tamely; but being minded to stay out of —— as long as possible, we'll fight. All hands on deck! Sir Phelim, you and your Irishmen get up food for one meal, a beaker of rum or wine, and arms. Dickon, down from aloft!"

Then Frontin, knowing that the ice movement had halted with the tide, did a singular and characteristic thing.

In the galley was still smoldering a fire, whence the smoke-signal had been drifting aloft. He ran to it, seized the ends of brands and whipped them into the embers, raked all the fire into a pot, crammed in some rotten canvas that had been used for tinder, and with the flaming pot swinging in his hand darted down the deck aft—and chucked the whole thing into the stern cabins. Then he whirled upon the shouting, startled men and his voice drove at them:

"Quick! Ships are close to us, all around us—an English fleet! We must get away and take the corvette that holds Cap'n Crawford—swift, before the flames reach the powder!"

Cursing, shouting mad oaths, furious alarm and terror plucking at them, the men scrambled to obey. Sir Phelim whipped his Irish with crackling Gaelic words, while Frontin got the other men at work swinging out the tiny skiff from the stern, with the smoke rolling up from below and the thought of powder-kegs to drive them with the spur of necessity.

Now, as if to increase their mad panic and frenzy of haste, there came out of the whole ship a frightful scream of twisted oak; and she began to move upward, slowly, as the ice smashed through her hull, nipped her, began to lift her.

Into the skiff went fusils and pistols and blades, food and drink; one by one the men dropped down to the ice, seized ropes and made fast to the skiff, or lifted at her bodily, each man cursing his neighbor to make better haste. Then they drew away from the groaning, heaving mass of timber, stumbling and slipping over the ice, following the tall figure of Frontin and the limping, shorter form of Sir Phelim Burke.

So the fog closed around them.

After a little, a ruddy brightness pierced the obscurity in the rear as the red flames leaped high. After this had vanished behind the curtain of heavy fog, came a sullen, booming detonation that flung them all asprawl over the ice and shook the thick floes, and left a frightful desolation in each man's heart.

"Forward!" shouted Frontin, and they struggled up.

III

CRAWFORD was momentarily paralyzed by the blow that felled him; yet, although dazed and rendered incapable of motion, he did not lose consciousness. He dimly realized that he was being dragged back into the cabin by Moses Deakin; then he was lifted and placed in a chair and firmly lashed to it. Deakin rumbled with laughter.

"A good blow, one worth learning! You're not hurt—come around after a bit——"

Deakin stamped out and went on deck.

Sagging down in the chair and closing his eyes, Crawford relaxed utterly and rested while he might, wasting no thought on his own carelessness; he had been caught, and must face the future instead of the past. After a time his senses cleared again and the agonized ache slowly passed out of his neck and head and nerve-centers, until at length he dropped into a light doze.

From this he was wakened by a trampling on the deck above, and heard the stentorian tones of Deakin bellowed forth through a speaking-trumpet. Deakin had a voice like brass:

"Come back! Come back!" roared the words. "Come back!"

Then, after a little, Crawford jerked up his head and came wide awake as Deakin returned into the cabin.

"Awake, eh? The ice is on the move again, and if those fools o' mine be not spry they'll be caught. Well, well—let's have your 'bacca."

Stooping over Crawford, Deakin swiftly searched him, throwing weapons, tobacco-pouch and pipe to the table, and finally drawing forth the star on its thong. For a long moment he hesitated over the emerald jewel, greed fighting in his large eyes against a stronger fear; then he reluctantly shoved it back beneath Crawford's shirt.

"Not that, not that!" he rumbled. "I'm none too certain it bain't wizardry, and I'll ha' no war-lock after me o' nights. 'Twas the star that brought ye here, yourself said it; and Moses Deakin knows when to let things bide."

With this astonishing speech the fur-pirate lowered himself into his own chair, facing Crawford, stuffed some of the latter's Virginia tobacco into his pipe, and made a light. Crawford held himself in check, for in a flash he realized the singular streak of superstition in his captor and resolved to see whither it tended. Nor did Deakin long delay in setting forth the matter, displaying a great confidence and assurance in himself and his deductions and suppositions:

"Fog's down again and the outer ice splitting; if the wind hauls around into the east'ard, we'll be free. Blood and wounds! A month we've been fighting this cursed ice. And now, Crawford, what's to do with ye? If the ice comes to a stop tonight, I'll have that bark of yours. Come over and hang Moses Deakin, eh? Let 'em try it! If they come, you're here for hostage; if they come not, then ye lied to me and y'have a weak crew."

Shrewd reasoning enough, and Crawford was keenly alarmed by it. But now Deakin leaned forward and clawed his great beard, and grinned, and shot forth a direct question—

"So ye thought to steal into the bay and seize the Star Woman from me, eh?"

"Never heard of her," said Crawford promptly.

"That's a lie—ha! Put steel into me, will ye? That's a lie, and I say it again! South sea passage, eh? Ye knew well enough there was none. 'Twas the Star Woman ye wanted. I know when a man's tellin' the truth, Crawford. It was the truth ye spake about the green star, and a lie about the south sea passage. So ye thought to sneak across the bay and find the Star Woman, eh? There's wizardry in that, or ye'd never have known about her, nor ha' found me on the ice neither. Aye, wizardry! And the star brought ye here, as ye said."

Crawford was more than a little bewildered by this talk, but the gaze of Deakin settled him and sobered him. Moses Deakin sucked at his pipe, while his abnormally large eyes were fastened upon his prisoner in a stare that was queerly unwinking. Indeed, from time to time the lids, instead of drooping, lifted slightly.

Once before had Crawford seen just such a stare as this, but then in the eyes of a woman. That was years ago in Ireland. He remembered the cold and rainy night, with Phelim Burke sitting across the campfire, and the old hag wandering in through the lines; the "Wicklow Witch," they had called her. He remembered how she had squatted down there by the fire, staring from him to Sir Phelim with that queer, momentary distending of her eyes; and she had talked of Granuaile and Red Hugh and Brian O'Rourke and others of the mighty dead.

With an effort, Crawford forced himself back to the present situation, and spoke quietly:

"I came freely with you, Moses Deakin. Is this honest treatment of a guest?"

"Sink you and your fine words! Little I care for 'em."

The Bostonnais breathed deeply, his wide nostrils flaring to each breath, and removed the pipe to scratch at his twi-pronged tangle of grizzled beard. He reverted at once to his chosen subject:

"That French buccaneer, Frontin, gave ye news of her, and the star brought ye here. Ay, that'll be the way of it! I'll do ye no harm, Crawford, nor the star neither, for I'll need to walk carefully wi' war-locks and will take no chances. A Cree wizard told me two years ago that no weapon or hand o' man could hurt me, and I'd only come to my end by the gift of a woman. So I ha' naught to do with women, unless it be the Star Woman. She always smiles at me, so I know she be right friendly and well-disposed."

He puffed his pipe into a last flicker of smoke. Crawford understood that he was in Deakin's estimation something of a wizard, and was being treated to confidences. This realization drew the ghost of a smile to his lips. He racked his brains for some means of turning the fact to his advantage, but found none. Deakin was obviously wrapped up in his own fancies, which were sincere enough, and now went on with his rambling talk:

"So last year I sent messages to the Star Woman, bidding her come and meet me at my post this year. Far away she is, somewhere to the south and west, but all the tribes are afraid of her name. Shall I have a look at her, Crawford? Ay, say ye so. I'll have a smile from her lips and tell ye what she's about this minute—most like she's over on the other side the bay now, for she'll have had my messages that went from tribe to tribe to reach her."

The giant laid aside his pipe. He shoved the heavy table so that it came under the arms of Crawford's chair and under Crawford's eye. Then, rising, he went to a locker and produced a shallow, pewter dish. He set this on the table, and reached down a flask, pouring into the dish a dark and glittering fluid which might have been black quicksilver, had there been such a thing. With the dish between himself and Crawford, Deakin now tugged his chair forward and seated himself again.

"First I'll have a look at what's in the straits," he said. "Put your eyes on the witch-ink, Crawford, and tell me if ye see aught."

The Bostonnais stared down at the dark fluid, intent and absorbed, his huge frame bent over in the chair, his pronged beard sweeping the table, his immense hands outstretched and motionless. The monstrous incongruity of such a man engaged on so childish a task smote Crawford with a mad impulse to burst out laughing; yet he checked it sternly. Whatever the man's delusion might be, it held a deadly sincerity. Also, Crawford had heard in Boston that this Moses Deakin was famed for seeing visions, and now he saw the explanation of the rumors.

Being himself without credulity and putting no faith in second sight or witchcraft, Crawford waited for what might come. It occurred to him that Deakin, if possessed of any practical desire to apply his magic, might well summon up a vision of the *North Star* at the moment, and save his scouts their work. Those who work wizardry, however, apparently eschew its more commonsense benefits.

"Look!" Deakin suddenly started, and his big hands gripped. "A fifty-gun ship!"

Crawford gazed down at the dark fluid and saw in it only the mirrored reflection of Deakin's hairy visage. The other man, however, spoke excitedly:

"White flag at her poop—a Frenchman! Blood and wounds, a ship o' the line! There's men aboard her; ay, the faces come out now! What be Canadians be doing aboard she? And red Injuns, and fine officers in gold lace. I'll warrant they're cold! And yonder's her cap'n; a fine handsome man he is, and a boy with him, likely his brother——"

Crawford sent astonished gaze to the fluid, and found nothing. Could Deakin really be seeing anything there? That man and boy—they must be Iberville and his young brother Bienville! Crawford had encountered them in Newfoundland. He remembered now that Iberville had been awaiting ships from France, that there had been some talk of going to the bay——

"Iberville!" he exclaimed. "It's Iberville!"

That name, so dreaded on the bay, smote the Bostonnais. Deakin lifted his head and stared, in his wild and hairy countenance a sudden, amazed awe.

"War-lock, wi' the star at your breast—aye, well I guessed it!" he breathed hoarsely. "Iberville, is it? Then Moses Deakin goes not near the south o' the bay this voyage. He be no man, but devil incarnate. Perdition takes him and his Frenchmen! I'll look no more, but call up the Star Woman. Set a name to her likewise if ye can, Crawford; sink me if ye have not more power than I at my own game! War-lock, indeed!"

He lowered his face again and stared anew at the visage.

Crawford, realizing now how the man was ridden by his superstition, tried to discover some trick in the matter—for he refused to credit that Deakin saw real images in the dark fluid. Perhaps the man had learned that a French squadron was heading north. Perhaps this whole thing was a lie and a delusion, either deliberate trickery or self-delusion on Deakin's part. Perhaps there were no ships in the straits at all! That, indeed, was more likely than not.

"Now I see her!" cried Deakin.

Peering down, Crawford saw only the distended gray eyes reflected in the dish, yet the other man was concentrated, tense, quivering with inward excitation, completely gripped by his own fantasy, if fantasy it were.

"Look, Crawford! She's standin' at the door of a lodge—blood and wounds, what a queer sort o' lodge it is! Painted skin, it looks like, wrapped around poles. I never see no Injun cabins like that. She's dressed in beaded skin, wi' silver bracelets and gewgaws, and a star on her breast; made o' blue stone, looks like. Ay, she's smilin' at me! For all her skin is dark, she's a white girl, I tell 'ee——"

He stared down, breathing hard, wide nostrils flaring out and in, beard twitching. Crawford could not doubt that the man was in dread earnest, believing the thing that he saw there.

Then came abrupt wakening, sudden and swift return to sanity.

From the deck overhead sounded a medley of shouts and a trampling of feet, and the rise of excited voices. Steps thumped on the ladder, and into the cabin came the officer whom Crawford had seen before. Deakin looked up with a growled oath.

"The men are in, master," exclaimed the man eagerly. "There's open water a half-mile outside of us—a wide channel. The ice ha' stopped moving outside and be jammed again to the north'ard. Fog down like always, but the upper-wind's haulin' around. Looks like she'll be in east'ard by morning, cap'n."

Deakin stared at him a moment, then crashed out rapid orders:

"That means the ice be goin' fast. Get out the skids and chock the pinnace into 'em for haulin' across the ice. Lay food and powder in her. Lay the little skiff overside too—we'll carry her across to the open water."

"Be goin' to leave ship, master?" came the astonished query.

"Aye, 'bose.' We be goin' to take Crawford's ship—gold aboard her! We'll work up to her i' the pinnace, take her, and be back afore morning. Leave the three men worst down wi' the scurvy to hold the *Albemarle* and signal us. Ice won't go out afore turn o' the tide come morning. Sharp, now, sharp! We ha' no time to dilly away. Chuck me down a coil o' light line, and sharp about it."

Bose disappeared. Moses Deakin returned the dark fluid to the flask, placed it with the dish in the locker, then turned and stood regarding Crawford.

"Two hundred pound on ye in Boston town!" His barrel of a chest heaved in a deep breath of resignation. "No, I'll take no chances. Two hundred pound is much gold, but a war-lock is not to be tampered with. I'll do ye no hurt, nor the star neither. None the less, I'll not leave ye free to shout."

A coil of line rattled down the ladder. Deakin went and picked it up, tore a piece of canvas from a dirty strip in the corner and came to Crawford. The latter was firmly and efficiently gagged before he realized what was happening.

Moses Deakin had thoroughly convinced himself that Crawford was something in the nature of a wizard and that the emerald jewel was a thing of magic power. Only this obsession would explain his reluctant decision to let the jewel go, not to mention the very valuable head of its owner. That he should thus pass up two hundred pounds was an eloquent testimony to the strength of that obsession. Crawford stirred uneasily in his bonds.

"Our friend may have man's reason in the carcass of an animal," he reflected, "but so much the worse for him. If he had the brain of an animal, he might be better off. If he doesn't mean to hurt me, then what the —— does he intend—and why this gag?"

As if in response to this silent query, Deakin called down two of his men. They freed Crawford from the chair, then lashed his wrists together in front of him, and to the lashing attached a length of line. His feet were left free.

"All ready above?" inquired Moses Deakin.

"Aye."

"Then come wi' me, Crawford."

Deakin took the length of line and went to the ladder, his captive perforce following.

So they came out on deck, and Crawford was assisted to climb over the side to the ice. There the crew were grouped about the longboat or pinnace, which was chocked upon runners with ropes attached, and a tiny skiff which six of them picked up bodily. Three scurvy-staggering rascals bawled thin farewells from the rail above.

"Compass, in pinnace, bose?" asked Moses Deakin. "Then come along to open water."

He marched in the lead, a huge, ungainly figure, with Crawford on the line behind him. The men followed, carrying the skiff and dragging the pinnace on its sled. Thick fog was settled down about the *Albemarle*, and in ten paces she was lost to sight behind them. Under that fog, all was dark; the slanting sunlight of the arctic Summer's night was lost, ice and melted pools held dank terror instead of fiery, rainbow-hued splendor. Moses Deakin lifted his head, sniffed with his wide nostrils, and like an animal led straight for the open water which he could smell.

In this fashion half a mile was covered, the last of it being very precarious, since the floes were split into great cakes, and sharp cracks and reports told how further splitting was in progress. Then, abruptly, Deakin halted at the very edge of open water, swirling dark and ice-dotted as far as eye could pierce.

"Ice be goin' out tomorrow and wind on the shift," he announced, though Crawford could detect no faintest breath of breeze. "Launch the craft, bose. Current settin' out—good! Crawford, into the skiff."

Still far from realizing what was intended, Crawford climbed into the skiff while the men held it to the side of the floe. Deakin leaned over the little craft, which was empty of oars or anything else, and lashed the leading-line about a thwart. Then he unsheathed his knife and tossed it into the bottom of the skiff, took the craft by her stern, and with one mighty heave sent her swirling out into the water and fog.

"Ye'll be safe enough by the time ye get yourself free, Crawford!" came his roaring bellow. "And you're war-lock enough to reach the shore. Now, lads, get matches[*] lighted and into the pinnace with ye! We're off for Crawford's bark——"

The fog closed in, and its chill was no worse than the chill in Crawford's heart as the currents bore his little skiff out into the bay.

IV

THERE could now be no mistaking the fact that the ice was breaking up for good. The night was filled with a mighty diapason of roaring masses, pierced by the shriller notes of splitting floes and the occasional booming of a falling berg. Crawford knew that midnight must be far past by the time he managed to get free of his lashings.

It was no simple task even to reach the knife, much less to hold it between his feet and saw at his bound arms. The motion of the boat added to the difficulty, since the skiff was rocking against cakes of ice or rolling to sudden wavelets sent out from the welter of smashing floes and pans.

Oddly enough, during all this straining time Crawford's mind did not dwell particularly on his own fate, though that seemed certain enough. By the gradual appearance of freer water around, he knew that he was being rapidly borne off-shore, out into the vast inland sea, helpless to steer or to hinder his destiny. His thoughts, however, reverted to that paper which he had pressed into Frontin's hand at parting, that blood-stained paper which he had taken from the body of Moses Deakin's lieutenant.

His glance had caught only the first line of writing on that paper, yet now it came back into his mind with significant emphasis, and the words troubled him. They were simple words—

> Acct. of Goods to bee broke out for ye trade att ye Danish river.

Now they recurred with fresh meaning to Crawford. The Danish River, wherever that was, must be the location of Deakin's secret trading establishment.

"If I had but a sail and a chart of this cursed bay, I'd still best that hairy ——!" muttered Crawford, when at last his arms came free and he could chafe his numbed and swollen hands into life. "A war-lock, am I? I'll show him how a war-lock can fight if I ever meet the rascal again! That was queer talk of his about the Star Woman. I wonder if there's any truth in it? Ha—a breeze! Now to work."

A faint breath of wind fanned his cheek. There was no lift to the fog, which rolled down thicker and darker than ever, nor was the little breeze likely to sunder it. Crawford, facing the situation, found himself in total ignorance of direction. If the breeze came from the east, as Deakin had said, he would be carried off the land. He had no food or water, no blankets or sail; he had only the clothes on his back, the naked knife, and the light line which had bound him.

With these things, he fell to work.

Despite the bitter chill of the fog, he was forced to dispense with his outer fur-lined coat. Then he smashed away the 'midships thwart of the boat and split the long plank lengthwise until he had sticks to serve his purpose. These he fitted and spliced together with unravelled hemp, until he had a stout six-foot mast. Another stick in the arms of the coat made a very fair dipping-lug rig.

To get the rig installed was another matter, but eventually he had the mast stayed into place, got up his makeshift sail, made fast the lines, and chuckled anew as he felt it catch the faint breeze. He lay across the thwarts and heard the water go rippling past the counter more swiftly.

"War-lock indeed!" he commented, with a laugh. "The Star of Dreams is still guiding, and whither the star goes, I follow. It may well be that there is some truth in all this superstition—singular, how Deakin spoke of the Star Woman! Coincidence in the names, of course; yet—I wonder!"

He laughed again at the fancy, but quickly sobered. Crawford was tempted to be a trifle superstitious himself about that emerald star. He had taken it as the token of his flight from the world, of his quest after freedom, of his search for what lay beyond the horizon. Thus, from talking of it with Frontin or Sir Phelim, an inevitable reaction had taken effect upon his own mind; he fought against this and scorned it, yet none the less it lingered within him. Consequently, Deakin's wild talk about the Star Woman struck him as significant—until he forced himself to dismiss the whole thing as the wanderings of an unsound brain, the superstitious fancy of a bestial man.

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[*] Cf. "Conquest of Great Northwest," by A. C. Laut, note to Cap. XIII. Terms apparently incorrect but meaning clear enough. Also Gaya's "Treatise des Armes" makes explicit mention of matches.

"Danish River!" he reflected, coming back to his first thought. "If I knew where that place lay, and had food and water, I believe I'd try for it——"

He was now out of the ice and distinctly warmer, the breeze was freshening slightly, the fog was somewhat less dense; so, careless whither he was carried, finding the boat's bottom to be sound and dry, he curled up to sleep.

Morning came and he slept on, while the long wraiths of gray fog fled across the waters and thinned into shadows, and the wind came ever fresher and steadier out of the southeast to scatter the dissipating fog and blow the skiff out to north and west. Behind, the morning broadened, and overhead the fog gave place to blue sky, although the sun itself remained gray and dun through the heavy wrack of fog that still overhung the Labrador coast and the straits.

Ahead in the west, however, the mist went whirling away and was gone, until presently the sunlight struck all the wide expanse of sea into glittering radiance, with the enormous granite cliffs of Mansfield Island forming a long blur against the western horizon; while off to east and north the ice-blink made shimmering response to the sunlight, and from the straits came the distant rumble and grind of the ice-masses fighting for freedom under the blanket of fog.

Crawford wakened. He sat up, blinking at the sunlight, then stared at the running crests all around, and laughed in sudden joyous remembrance.

"I'll beat you yet, Moses Deakin!" he cried out exultantly. "No food, no rudder, no compass, no sail—and I'll beat you, sink me if I don't! Aye, war-lock or not, I'll give you a fight——"

The words died on his lips as he swung about, searching the sea with eager gaze. For there to the northeast, not a mile distant and standing squarely for him out of the cloud-bank that still hovered low above the straits, was a fifty-gun ship, white canvas towering up into the sky as she leaned over and headed for him across the wind!

He stared at her all agape, incredulous, then leaped to his feet with a blaze of excitement in his blue eyes. The French ship! Iberville! As he stood, leaning to the thrust of the boat and staring at her, the emerald jewel came out from beneath his shirt; he replaced it with fumbling fingers, and a smile broke on his lips.

"The Star of Dreams! Well, whether Deakin saw a vision of her or not, it seems that there lies the ship he saw. If I'm destined to meet Iberville again, I'll be glad of it. I wonder whether Deakin really saw that ship in the fluid?"

He had no answer to the query, but meet Iberville he did, when, half an hour later, he clambered up the side of the *Pelican* and struck hands with the eldest of the famous Le Moyne brethren. Young Bienville, boy in years yet wearing man's uniform, stood beside his brother and welcomed Crawford with a cry of eager greeting:

"I knew it was you! Pierre scoffed at me, but I knew it!"

"My faith, it's incredible!" exclaimed Iberville.

If the boy beside him stood proudly handsome with promise of maturity, Iberville the man was promise fulfilled; every line of his masterful, strongly balanced features bespoke the commander, the raider by sea and land, the reckless adventurer whose name rang through New World and Old.

"We met and parted in Newfoundland, and here we meet again on Hudson Bay! Where's that bark of yours, Crawford? Why are you here alone in an open boat?"

"Lay the tale on the shoulders of food, drink and tobacco, and it'll go better," and Crawford laughed.

Instantly Iberville seized his arm and led him aft, with hasty apologies, while the ship fell off on her course as the yards were braced.

Crawford's gaze took in the staring Rochefort marines, the clustered seamen, the groups of Canadians; then he was meeting the officers—Grandville of the marines, the wild bush-loper Martigny who had raided Acadia and Newfoundland with Iberville, the royal commissioner La Potherie, and others. Iberville, knowing his man, led Crawford down to the cabin and shut out all save Bienville; then, with food and wine before him, Crawford told his story by snatches.

In the midst of it came a wild hammering at the door. In burst a red-haired, cassocked figure who greeted Crawford with a great yell of joy and gripped his shoulders affectionately.

"Hal Crawford—by the piper! I was below with a poor dyin' ——"

"Fitzmaurice of Kerry!" exclaimed Crawford. "Why, this is a dream——"

"Oh, lad, it's like old times to see ye!" burst out Fitzmaurice, chaplain of the fleet. "Dost remember Limerick town, and the hammerer in the breach, and Dutch William's men pourin' in over us——"

"Here is one man who's not amenable to discipline," and Iberville laughed as he slammed the door shut again. "Sit down, Fitzmaurice, or I'll send you back to shrive more scurvy-stricken men! Crawford, you've met no English ships in the straits? None but that Bostonnais you were telling about?"

"None," said Crawford. "But where's your fleet?"

Iberville shrugged.

"My faith, how do I know? Ahead of us, I trust. We've been fighting the ice for weeks. The last I saw of the others was two days ago. My brother Serigny was far ahead of us in the *Palmier*. Du Guai, in the *Profound*, was almost at open water, and the *Wasp* likewise. We had news that an English fleet was on the way, but have seen nothing of them."

The Irish chaplain settled down, Crawford swallowed his wine and lighted a pipe, and the four men fell into talk. Iberville, avid for news, was confident that his brother Serigny and the other three ships were already steering for Fort Nelson; he had orders to sweep the English from the bay and meant to strike first at that post. When he had heard Crawford's tale, he laughed gaily and swung to his feet.

"Rest assured, my friend, you shall have your ship again and the best charts we can give you. Would that I were free to seek the south sea passage with you! *M. l'Abbé*, I offered this rascal a commission if he would sail with me—and he refused. Yet behold, here he is! Is this the hand of Providence or not?"

"Faith," and Fitzmaurice chuckled, "I'd call it Hal Crawford's luck! But where to, Pierre? Sit down, man, and smoke a pipe——"

"I must lay out the course and watch the charts," responded Iberville. "These pilots are afraid of the ice and shallows. Have your talk out in peace."

He departed. Bienville, leaning across the table with his eyes ashine, listened eagerly while Crawford and the red-haired chaplain conned the days that had passed since Limerick and Boyne water. Once Crawford turned to him smilingly—

"And suppose we find the English fleet ahead of us, Bienville?"

The boy shrugged.

"Ask Pierre. We've put some of our guns and near thirty seamen aboard the *Profound*, and two-score of our men are laid out with scurvy. But we'll not find the enemy ahead of us! Pierre is always the first!"

So the *Pelican* drove on to her destiny, while men laughed and made merry aboard her at thought of the green land so near, nor dreamed to what doom they rushed so gaily. And, while she drove on, strange things were taking place at the mouth of the straits where the curtains of fog still lingered, and blew away and returned again.

Strange things, indeed, and stranger sounds echoing back from those iron-bound cliffs than the Northland had ever heard! For there the flash of [illegible] split the fog, and the crashing thunder of broadsides boomed back from the headlands. When the thick mist lifted for a space that morning, the *Profound* was fast nipped in the ice, with three unsuspected English frigates about her stern; whereupon, as the terse chronicler puts it—

"Du Guai attacked."

Hour after hour he fought them with his two little stern-guns, hour after hour they poured their broadsides into him, until the fog closed down again and they thought him sunk, and the roaring cliffs fell silent.

There, too, ere this fight happened, Moses Deakin had fallen upon fate and found it bitter to the taste. Before the dawn came he sighted the flare of a ship in the ice, and drove his men at her, thinking her Crawford's bark. But she was something else—the *Hudson's Bay*, crowded with extra seamen and with servants of the English Company, and in command of her was the grim veteran Smithsend, who hanged fur-pirates and Frenchmen alike. The end of this matter was that Moses Deakin and half his Boston men sat in irons to await hanging at Nelson, and the other half of them lay dead on the ice.

And there, too, but farther south under the cliffs, Frontin and Sir Phelim Burke and their men fell upon the corvette *Albemarle* in the dawning. None too soon either, for the floes and shore ice were breaking up beneath their feet. Deakin's three scurvy-sick men fought them and were cut down; but one of them, before he died, related the fate that had befallen Crawford.

Then fell Frontin to work like a madman, and all of them likewise; and presently the *Albemarle* was working out through ice-channels, until she gained open water with the early light of day and tacked back and forth through the mist as the guns roared to the north. No sign of Crawford's little skiff did Frontin and Sir Phelim find, however.

So they, who no less than Moses Deakin had their destiny to accomplish, tacked down to the southward that day and then back again. And at set of sun, when the fog lifted for a little, there suddenly loomed through the grayness a huge shape, and a gun thundered in air above them; and over the puny, frightened corvette frowned the heavy batteries of Serigny in the *Palmier*. The Frenchmen came aboard and took her; Frontin, cursing bitterly, shook his fist at the fog and blasphemed like the buccaneer he was, as the ship was headed to the west and south. Then that night came storm, and the pilots were ignorant of the bay, and the ships drove blindly before the wind.

Thus did fate, working through the activities of little men, lay out a blood-red net in which to snare a hero. And Iberville, all unwitting, bore up for Fort Nelson.

V

ON THIS early September night there was gaiety aboard the *Pelican*. She lay anchored ten miles southwest of Fort Nelson, in the open bay, having reached the river the previous day only to find all buoys destroyed and the channel-markings removed.

Iberville dared not attempt the precarious river-entrance across the wide mud-flats until he had taken soundings. The bay charts and pilots were all with Serigny, as were his supplies and siege guns, and he was bitterly disappointed at not finding his other ships here ahead of him; at least, however, he had beaten the English squadron to the goal. So Martigny and a score of Canadians departed in the pinnace to take soundings and roam the woods in search of friendly Indians, and there was high celebration aboard the ship that evening.

Battle-lanterns hung about, the guns were shifted, and all hands made merry; there were fiddles, with a flute or two to help, and no lack of good wine all around. French and Canadians sang chansons and Mohawk chants, officers and men intermingling in Latin good-fellowship, voyageur and chevalier dancing or drinking together, Iberville joining hands with his powder-boys.

Crawford, looking on, took small part in all this rejoicing, and after a bit he went into the bows and stood there smoking, his eyes fastened on the play of lights in the northern sky, fighting the dim, sunny twilight to the south. There Iberville found him presently, and clapped him heartily on the shoulder.

"What, dreaming of stars? Come and try our good wine of Champagne! Tomorrow Martigny will return with the pinnace, we'll get guns and men ashore and crack this nut of Nelson. Why so gloomy?"

"Why so merry?" Crawford laughed softly. "I'm not gloomy; but your gay scene is not for me. I'm looking over the horizon."

"You'll die of that looking one day."

"Aye. And how better?"

Iberville nodded soberly, his spirit perfectly comprehending that of Crawford.

"How better, indeed? There's blood of mine in those dark forests ashore. My brother Chateauguay lies under the pickets of that fort, which I have taken once or twice ere this, and shall take again. Well, I fight for my king while you fight for a dream—and —— shrive me if I'd not like to go over the horizon with you! Don't look too long at those lights in the sky—ah, but you should see them in Winter, as I have seen them from yonder shores! Some say they foretell storm in Summer. The Indians hereabouts call them the 'spirits of dancing dead men.' There'll be dead men dancing ashore once I can get a mortar to bear on that accursed fort behind its cloak of trees!"

Iberville departed, and Crawford presently went to the cabin which he shared with Fitzmaurice of Kerry, and in ten minutes he was sound asleep to the whine of the fiddles and the soft throating of the flutes.

It was broad daylight when he wakened to a great sound of trampling feet on the decks, to roars of joyous shouts and exultant oaths. The chaplain burst in upon him and dragged him bodily from his berth.

"Up and on deck, ye sluggard! Here the fleet's in sight—Serigny's come at last, and we're standing out to meet 'em!"

When Crawford got on deck, he found the *Pelican* heading out for the open bay where three sails were in sight. The air had turned bitter cold and storm was brewing in the gray sky, but who cared for that? Serigny was sighted, a stroke at Nelson would be made that day! Out stood the ship to welcome her comrades, gay flags decking her from stem to stern, and Grandville's gunners unstopping cannon for a salute of welcoming.

Gaining the high poop-deck by the helm, where Iberville stood with his brother, Crawford joined the group of officers. Signals were run up, and Iberville raised a glass to scrutinize the approaching ships. Then Crawford saw his eyes widen, saw him lower the glass, saw a sudden deadly pallor creeping into his cheeks. For an instant Iberville stood thus, then turned and quietly touched the arm of La Potherie, the royal commissioner.

"Order food served out at once, Bacqueville—quickly! Then take charge of the forecastle; I'll send the Canadians to you. Bienville, how many men aboard fit for service?"

"A hundred and two-score, Pierre," responded the boy carelessly.

"Go below. Tell Grandville and La Salle to clear the lower deck for action. You'll take the upper tier with de Ligondez. Why the —— didn't Martigny come back last night! We've not enough men to man the guns. Here, sergeant!"

A Rochefort marine saluted.

"Have hand-ropes stretched along the decks—ice is forming already, I see. Order the magazines opened. St. Martin! Get every Canadian to the forecastle instantly, with fusils and fresh horns of powder, and serve out bullets. Swiftly, swiftly!"

For one moment every eye was fastened upon Iberville in stupefied amazement. From the masthead came down a sharp cry—

"No signals answered!"

Silence came upon the ship, a dread and terrible silence of wild consternation, of horrified incredulity—until a Canadian gave voice to the sharp, yelping war-whoop of the Iroquois. Then all beheld tiny flecks of red break out from the three ships bearing down the wind, and the white smoke of a gun burst out.

Not Serigny—but the enemy!

Crawford turned to Iberville—

"You'll run out to sea?"

Iberville smiled slightly, his eye flitting over the ship, where mad activity was now leaping forth—gunners stripping, boys on the run with powder, ports slamming open, ropes being stretched for hand-hold, shot being broken out and guns unstopped. Spray was forming into ice as it fell. Iberville turned and silently swept his arm in three directions. The threefold gesture included the shore to the north, the long stretches of reefs and shallows to west and south—and to the east the open sea where the three English ships foamed onward.

"Why run, when one must fight?" said Iberville briefly. "Stand by the helm, my friend, for I'll have need of you there. The *Pelican* goes forward!"

And go forward she did, with the crash of a gun to echo the words.

It meant something that Iberville was a captain, in a day when ensigns commanded brigs, lieutenants sailed frigates, and captains maneuvered fleets. Against him were three ships, each of them a fair match alone for the crippled *Pelican*, and four veteran commanders for the English Company who knew every foot of the uncharted waters. During three and a half hours Iberville fought them with his seamanship, while his lieutenants fought them with small arms and great, and the guns thundered.

The tactics of the English never varied. They had Iberville where they wanted him—outnumbered, cut off from flight, with treacherous shoals reaching from the land for miles to entrap him. Again and again they tried to force him in upon the shallows; again and again he evaded the trap, tacking back and forth while his guns roared. Ball and grape screamed through his rigging, for their one intent was to dismast and cripple and pound him. As fast as a line was shot away, the seamen were up and repairing it, and ever Iberville kept out of reach, kept off the shoals, gave back broadside for broadside.

The wind was freshening fast, the cold was growing more intense, snow threatened. On the forecastle clustered the dark Canadians, half-naked and painted to the waist, joining musketry and Mohawk whoop to the din; La Salle and Grandville fought the lower-deck guns, young Bienville the upper tier after Chevalier de Ligondez was struck down. From every hand iron and lead was smashing into the devoted *Pelican*, until her decks were red with frozen blood as she tacked and wore, and the hand-lines were crimson-dripping streaks, and from fighting ice her marines were fighting flames.

Yet ever she evaded the shoals, while Fitzmaurice of Kerry tended a gun or knelt over a dying man; and from the tall figure of Iberville shot swift and cool orders to Crawford who helped swing the great rudder of the doomed ship. For doomed she was, as every man there knew well ere the fight was an hour gone, yet in the furious exultancy of battle none cared.

Solid shot and grape and musketry they poured into her, and she gave back shot and grape and musketry—but each time a little less swiftly, as her gunners died, and scurvy-smitten scarecrows staggered up from below to drag weakly at the guns. Foot by foot, it seemed, she was driven back, cornered and hemmed in, the three ships bearing around her like wolves around a stag at bay. Noon came and passed, but none thought of food. Crawford, following the anxious looks of Iberville, saw the storm-clouds sweeping blackly down, knew the wind was thickening—and swung the helm grimly.

Then, suddenly, burst from Iberville a shrill cry:

"Wear, Crawford—wear! For the love of heaven——"

Crawford flung himself to help the St. Malo man at the helm. There upon them was bearing the *Hampshire*, driving full down the wind with obvious intent to ram and sink the battered *Pelican*. A huge ship was the *Hampshire*, new and stoutly built, and Fletcher on her quarterdeck; but he had Iberville to reckon with, and he failed in the stroke, and Crawford saw him shaking his fist and cursing in furious rage as he lost the weather-gage and was evaded.

With this, the two ships ran down the wind yard to yard, so close that boarders gathered in readiness, so close that bulwarks almost crashed at every sea, so close that English and French answered curses with curses, grenades with grenades—while the great guns thundered in broadsides that sent each ship rocking and reeling and staggering down the rolling seas. Fletcher would not be first to draw off, nor would Iberville, so the guns roared, and men died, until a last crashing broadside sent the *Pelican* up into the wind with her rigging half cut away and more than half the men in her waist mowed down by the storm of grape. In this moment she was theirs for the taking.

But there was none to take her.

Crawford, struck down by a splinter, was dragged to his feet by a shrill, terrible screaming of dying men. He looked for the enemy ship, and saw only a welter of shattered masts and rigging—she had plunged like a sounding whale, was gone all in an instant, down until she staggered upon the shallows and lay quiet with only her topmasts above water, and wounded men screaming as they drowned.

"Hard over!" yelled Iberville, and leaped to the helm. "At them, Bienville—fire!"

Once more the guns crashed out, and for the last time. The *Hudson's Bay* reeled up into the wind and lowered flag and foresail as Iberville swooped upon her. The *Dering*, not waiting to face the Frenchman alone, shook out her reefed sails and went scudding away through the tempest for Fort Nelson and safety.

But Iberville groaned as his eye swept the red-frozen decks, while his ship bore down upon Smithsend's captured frigate. Then he was at the helm, once more in action.

"Take fifteen men and board her as we touch, Crawford. Swiftly! Get a mortar aboard her and work her into the river if you can, before the storm hits us. Use the mortar on the fort——"

Crawford leaped into the waist, while Iberville's voice sent men to join him, and the two ships came staggering and reeling together, and grapnels were thrown. Crawford jumped across the shattered rails, the men trailing after. Somehow, all scrambled aboard, the grappling-irons were flung off, and the stricken *Pelican* was lurching away in pursuit of the escaped *Dering*.

Here on the prize Crawford found dying men, blood frozen in pools, screams and curses resounding. Smithsend came up to him, bitterly enough, and started at Crawford's English words.

"Your parole, cap'n? Good. I'm to take you into the river if possible."

"More like into the mouth of hell," growled Smithsend. "Rudder's gone, we're half full of water, haven't enough men left alive to man a tier of guns——"

Crawford stood aghast, for the ship was torn into ribbons alow and aloft. Then, as something touched his face, he looked up and saw a drift of white snowflakes breaking down the wind.

"Run in beside the wreck of your frigate and anchor, and get the pumps repaired," he ordered, and sent his men to help the English seamen.

Groping her way, the wounded ship slowly reeled in toward the shallows and dropped anchor, still miles off the land. There was no help to be given the *Hampshire's* crew, however. These had gone under the icy water, to the last man.

Crawford met with no opposition whatever as he took over the ship; the English were dazed, stunned, unable to realize that they had been beaten in battle. While some patched up the gaping holes below and got the ports shut, others labored getting the pumps into action. Crawford, looking for wounded, crawled into the forepeak; and as a man behind him held up a lantern, he gazed into the snarling features of Moses Deakin.

Astounded, he saw that Deakin was in irons, and half-buried under the shot-torn bodies of other men in irons, while groans came from the darkness around. Crawford seized the lantern and held it up. A great cry burst from the Bostonnais—

"Crawford! Blood and wounds, be it you or not?"

Crawford made no response, but turned and went back on deck, leaving his men to care for any wounded there. He sought out Smithsend and discovered how Deakin had come aboard, but for the present he let things bide as they were, hoping that the situation would become no worse for all of them.

Vain hope! After a time the shot-riven *Pelican*, having failed to catch the third ship, came tacking back in the driving snow and anchored. Iberville demanded pilotage into the river, but stout Smithsend, who had flung his sailing directions overboard, refused point-blank. The storm had settled into a howling tempest out of the northeast, and with night the sea was rising in huge billows rolling down the length of the bay.

Hawser after hawser parted; in vain Crawford and Smithsend tried to keep the rudderless ship where she was. From the wounded men came low shrieks of utter despair as the frigate went staggering blindly down the wind, ice forming over everything, snow hiding the foamy seas from sight, nothing to be seen but the faces of the unburied dead men peering horribly through the ice.

It was a night of horror, with naught to be done save to work the pumps and hope for the best, as the weight of ice dragged her more heavily down by the nose and she drifted aimlessly before the wind. About midnight Crawford crawled down to where Moses Deakin lay, and after unlocking the man's irons gave him the keys.

"Set your men loose, what are left alive. I can't leave you here to drown like rats. Come up above and get some food."

Then he was back on deck again, where Smithsend was trying to fashion a jury-rudder from the smashed rigging aloft.

Toward morning the ship struck heavily, but wrenched free, passed over the shoal, and drove on. With day the storm was whirling down worse than ever, huge waves bursting over the ship, water gaining on the pumps, every man reeling with weariness and utter exhaustion. During a lull in the tempest, Crawford peered off to starboard and saw a dim shape rolling stern-first before the wind, and knew the *Pelican* was lost. The brazen voice of Moses Deakin thundered at his ear:

"She's driving on the middle shoal! We're outside. She'll strike, and the land six mile away. Pray to your star now, Crawford, for we'll go ashore farther down the coast."

Both ships were indeed lost, for the shores were miles distant and guarded by long shallows, all the small boats were shot away, and every instant the weight of new ice was bearing the bows deeper into the water. So they drove on, and any thought of enmity between French and English was forgotten, since death was upon them all alike. Fur-pirates and company servants and French seamen huddled together or worked at the pumps in dismal hopelessness.

With afternoon came more snow, hiding all the shores ahead. Crawford was at work in the icy bows, trying to chop out a spare anchor, when suddenly he and his men were sent all asprawl on the ice, grasping at the hand-lines as they were hurled headlong. With a hideous shudder and lurch, the doomed ship struck, lifted, and struck again. Crawford saw the masts topple, heard the crash of splintered wood above the roar of the storm, and then was borne overboard with the tangle of masts and spars and rigging.

VI

IF EVER a man made use of his head in times of yawning disaster and with certain death on all sides, that man was Moses Deakin. He had survived in a perilous trade these many years by just such ability, and now with the *Hudson's Bay* ashore on the shallows, he used his wits fast and well. No mercy awaited him from the English company's men, as he well knew, and the French would hang him out of hand for the pirate he was if they caught him.

The ship was sogged into the shallows with her bows under water, waist and high stern exposed and beginning to break up fast as the thunderous waves burst above her. All was flying spray, confusion, screams of men as the wounded were washed away. On the poop, Smithsend was knocking a raft together to float some of the wounded ashore. The land was at least three miles distant, but was quite hidden behind snow and obscurity. So far as Deakin was concerned, that land was about as perilous as the bay, but he acted swiftly.

His brazen voice gathered three of his surviving men, and with these he made his way to the waist of the ship. There under the flying spray three seamen were at work, desperately trying to loosen the two halves of the broken mainyard which had smashed through the bulwarks and wedged there. Deakin leaped upon the seamen and struck them down, his men knocked them into the surging tide below; whirling, Deakin roared orders at the three:

"Go get some food, a fusil, and dry powder—sharp about it! Strip some tarpaulin off the guns below, and fetch it here. Move fast, blast ye! She's breakin' up."

Breaking up she was. Wretched men were going to leeward, clinging to bits of wreckage, swimming frantically, pulling each other down. Moses Deakin hurled himself at the two fragments of the great spar lodged in the bulwarks, tugged them free, tore at other flotsam, stood guard over it all until one by one his three men came staggering back to the spot with their burdens. One bore food and a fusil, another had powder and ball and pistols, the third brought tarred canvas.

Moses Deakin sent them after line, and got the powder and weapons and food all firmly lashed inside roll after roll of the tarred canvas. Then the four of them flung to work at the spars and wreckage, and in ten minutes accomplished more than the green hands on the poop with Smithsend could do in an hour's time. They were seasoned men, knowing well what fate faced them unless they grasped at the forelock of destiny—therefore they grasped hard and sure, and without pity.

They got the little raft into the water, loaded their precious burden aboard her, and caught hold of the lines they had rigged on each side. She floated high. Next moment men were around them, pleading, yelling, fighting for a shred of the visible hope. Moses Deakin struck them down, towering above them all, a long jagged splinter of rail in his hand. Then his voice boomed, and they were off, all four men swimming, while they drifted inshore with the wind and current.

Still other men came clustering about them, dark figures pouring out of the broken and reeling wreck as ants pour forth from a burning log. Wounded men, English seamen, company servants, one or two Frenchmen. Deakin and his men watched them come in silence, struck out grimly and mercilessly, beat off the refugees, and kept their raft ever pushing ahead over the shallows, leaving in their wake a mournful wail of despairing voices that followed them down the wind.

The four quickly overtook and passed the first stragglers, resolutely shoving onward, pausing only to smite down one or two who sought the help of their float. Thus they had covered a half-mile when Moses Deakin uttered a relieved grunt:

"Down feet! Shoal."

They let themselves down, found the water shoulder-high, presently only waist-high. At this level it remained for another two miles, and they dragged the float by the ropes; Moses Deakin was in the lead, bent over, straining at the lines with his immense strength, nostrils flaring as he sniffed the shore. Presently this came into sight ahead, the low ground dark with trees. Twenty minutes later the four men were carrying their burdens from the water, staggering through snow and shore-ice up to the line of trees, where they sank down in exhaustion.

"No time to waste here," panted Moses Deakin, gazing into the storm and wiping the spray from his face, his great beard heaving above his chest. "We're seven or eight leagues east o' Nelson. No use goin' west—such o' them fools as gets ashore will all head that way."

"Then where the —— do we head for—Severn?" demanded one of the three, ironically.

"Aye, Fort Severn."

"Then the English company hath a gallows there, master."

Deakin glared at the objector from bloodshot eyes; then, realizing the need for patience, stooped and drew with his finger in the sand a rough right-angle.

"Look 'ee! We be forty leagues south o' Danish River. How be we to get there? Not by walking, wi' the woods full o' French and English rogues; besides, by shore 'tis more like eighty leagues! Therefore, turn toward Severn. Ye fool, we may not have a mile to go! We'll find redskins anywhere about here, at the first creek we come by, and redskin canoes too. They're all at the coast for trade in the Summer. Follow the coast east and we'll come on 'em. Then we ha' the tarpaulins for sails. Blood and wounds! Get a canoe and head north—what better d'ye want? Canoe can go over the shallows—French ships must go six leagues out to sea to get a draft o' seven fathom! D'ye get it in your thick head?"

"Aye, master——"

"Then keep it there."

Deakin knocked the man sprawling and sprang up.

"To shanks' mare and away! The storm be goin' down tonight, most like."

The four men rose and went lurching off along the edge of the trees, following the low line of the shore. Half-frozen as they were, they dared not linger to light a fire.

Meanwhile, with the strong set of currents bearing it eastward along the coast, all the tangled top-hamper of the wreck drifted off, and in the midst of it was Crawford. Struck overboard, knocked all but senseless, he found himself half-drowned amid the wild confusion of lines and canvas and spars that crushed together with every lift of the heavy seas. The icy water jarred his senses awake and he fought for life, desperately, until at length he dragged himself half upon the ice-smooth maintop and lashed himself firmly to it as it rolled. Then he relaxed, in utter weariness and exhaustion, and for a long while knew no more.

During two days, in fact ever since Fitzmaurice had pulled him from his berth to come and see the approaching squadron, Crawford had not closed his eyes. He had gone through battle and tempest, had been on a tremendous bodily and mental tension the entire time; this final agonized struggle in the ice water, which left him numbed and half-drowned, summoned up the last atom of physical and nervous energy. Drained of strength, safe lashed to the maintop, he passed into unconsciousness.

It was long hours later when he opened his eyes. There was scarcely enough life in his brain for it to catch any impressions. His body was quite helpless, powerless, his sodden garments fast frozen to the maintop, and waves still broke over him. None the less, he dimly comprehended that there was clear sunlight overhead, and that the tempest must have blown itself out. So he was not dead after all! Not dead, but evidently dreaming, for there reached to his senses, as if from a great distance, the brazen voice of Moses Deakin:

"What, ye will not? Blood and wounds, but I say ye shall! Into the water, all of ye! In, and haul him ashore! But for him ye'd be frozen stark this minute, ye rogues; and Moses Deakin pays tit for tat. Move sharp, or I'll bash your lousy heads!"

Crawford tried to see who spoke, but his feeble gaze could comprehend only ice and water. The spars and wreckage surged. Then in front of him he beheld a fragment of jagged wood unflung and come toppling at him, nor could he move a muscle to avoid it. Down it came, crashed him over the head and forced him beneath the water, and again his eyes closed and he knew no more.

After that, he had a strange vision. A delicious pain ran through his whole body as warmth crept into it, and soft fingers of women were dressing his hurts, and he was drinking hot broth; he saw around him strange dark faces, and took them for Indians. Not the redskins he had known, but flatter-faced people sloven with dirt, lacking the pride and fierceness of the Iroquois. Then all this drifted away again upon the wings of sleep.

Then, with the next awakening, Crawford was himself in mind if not in body, and all his senses were clear, though his head was heavily bandaged.

He awoke to warmth and sunlight flooding sparkling wave-crests, and the slow rise and fall and surge of a craft under sail. He perceived that he was sitting propped up amidships in a long canoe; behind his shoulders was a pole, to either end of which was lashed a bit of plank. These planks went down into the water, on each side of the canoe, acting as a center-board. The craft was speeding forward under a good breeze, was heading to the north, and her sail was made from patched tarpaulin. Two men, at first strangers to Crawford, were lying asleep in the bow, but gradually he recognized them as two of Moses Deakin's followers. From behind him sounded the rumbling tones of Deakin, conversing with another man.

"Aye, that's the wreck of Iberville's ship down yonder. She's a good two leagues off the coast, and the same from the fort—smoke i' the trees means that some of 'em have got safe ashore, plague take 'em!"

"We'd ha' better chance for life with them than i' the wilderness," grumbled the man. "What be the use o' making Danish River, master? Injuns won't be there this time o' year, and we ha' no ship."

"How d'ye know that, ye rogue?" snapped Deakin fiercely, and then laughed. "No Injuns? Wait and see. If they have word for me from the Star Woman, they'll wait! As for the ship, we left three men aboard her. Soon's the ice loosed her, they'd bring her across the bay to our old place. We have only to wait. And if they come not, what then? Why, make the best of it! Blood and wounds, can we not Winter with the redskins? Or we can come south again after the fighting's done and take a craft from one o' the forts. Aye, that —— Iberville is safe ashore—hark to the great gun from the fort! Likely he's hammering at the gates with his naked fists."

The dull note of a distant cannon rolled across the water.

So it was not a dream—he was alive! Crawford relaxed and closed his eyes again. He could realize that Moses Deakin had saved his life, could dimly grasp that it had been done to repay his own act in setting Deakin free; he could even figure out to some extent all that had passed, since the Bostonnais was now heading for the Danish River. But nothing mattered. Weariness returned upon him, and although hunger was gnawing at his vitals, he fell back into slumber.

Then oaths and wild curses, with a brazen roar of animal fury from Moses Deakin, brought him sitting up wide awake once more. The four men in the canoe were pouring forth a storm of bitter imprecations, which for once were sincere and heartfelt. Crawford, seeing the men in the bow shaking their fists to starboard, turned his head.

There, far out beyond the shallows that hedged the whole low coast, he saw the white sails of three tall ships heading southward, and behind them the brown sails of a corvette. This, as the raging curses of his companions informed him, was no other than the *Albemarle*.

The distant roll of a cannon came to them.

"Aye, they've seen us, and much good it'll do them. So the French ha' got our ship, eh?" Moses Deakin faced the issue squarely. "Never mind that, lads, never mind! Forward to the Danish, and we'll find the redskins waiting for us. We'll find the Star Woman there, most like, or else a message from her; they'll wait until the ice comes again—ha! Awake, Crawford? Here's food and drink, such as we ha' got left. Don't move too much, for this cursed craft is cranky."

Crawford ate and drank thankfully, and as a small river appeared on their left, Deakin held the canoe in for it in order to renew their scanty supply of fresh water and give all hands a half-hour ashore, as well as to rearrange the make-shift sail.

Upon landing, one of the men took the fusil and departed in search of game, presently coming back with a rabbit. A fire was got going and all five gathered about it. Crawford was weak, but long sleep had refreshed him and the weakness would soon pass, while his split scalp was already healing beneath soothing Indian unguents. When the five men had polished off the last scrap of meat from the boiled bones and supped the last drop of broth, a remnant of tobacco was shared.

"And now—what?" demanded Crawford, meeting the wide gaze of Moses Deakin.

The latter, having learned Crawford's story by snatches, grimaced in his beard.

"As to you? Well, I said ye were a warlock, and it's proved true. Another eight leagues, and we'll land to cut across Cape Churchill. No use rounding that shore when we can save time and food by legging it. As for you, we're square. I've paid tit for tat."

"Granted," said Crawford. "Then you've seen nothing of my ship or men?"

"Nay. Come with us if ye like."

Crawford smoked out his scanty allotment of tobacco.

"Done," he said, and wondered whether he would find Frontin at the Danish River. If Frontin had been able to discover where that place was—if Frontin had brought the *North Star* to it—then what?

If there were no passage to the south sea, what was the future? Suddenly the horizon looked empty to Crawford. He put his hand inside his shirt. The Star of Dreams was still there. He pulled it forth, and the other men blinked at the green jewel. Moses Deakin, however, bent a sudden baleful glare upon the man he had rescued.

"War-lock or no, I'll tear the throat out of ye if ye think to steal her!" he growled.

Crawford stared at him, amazed, then started suddenly. He had forgotten about the Star Woman. A smile touched his lips.

"I'll not steal her from you, my word on it," he said quietly. "We are quits. And what have I to do with women? Nay, I'll not steal her from you, Deakin."

"I believe you," said Moses Deakin, and rose. "All hands! Let's be off."

VII

IN THE twilight of the Summer's night, with the barely sunken sun rising again, Crawford and Moses Deakin and three men of Boston town, once enemies but now strangely friends and allies against disaster, came upon the river which white men called the Danish, striking it two miles above the harbor. The five men, crossing overland from the other side of Cape Churchill through the woods, had met not a soul on the way, and for this there was good reason.

In ancient days the tribes had found a great ship floating here, full of dead white men and wonderful things, and they gathered around in scores to thaw out boxes and barrels; but certain of the kegs held powder. So ship and dead men and redskins went thundering up in ruin, and now the Indian called this the "River of Strangers," and shunned it in fear and legendary horror.

There in the land-locked harbor under Point Eskimo, stout Jens Munck[*] had watched his colonists die, had gone four days without food, knew himself dying of scurvy, and so sat down to pen the last line in his log-book. And what a trumpet-call of the spirit he wrote there!

> Herewith, goot night to all the world; and my soul to God.

Yet he lived, and lived to work one ship back to Norway, with two staggering men to help him. The Danish River had known heroes in those days, aye, and was to know heroes once again in days to come!

So Crawford and the four men with him started down the river-bank toward the harbor, following the course of the wide stream. As they went, Moses Deakin fired the fusil again and again in the air, and sent his stentorian voice ringing up among the trees, lifting brazen curses because neither his agent, who was a Cree chief, nor any other redskin appeared. If they had any message from the Star Woman, they would not dare go away until it was delivered.

Crawford, who was well again save for his half-healed scalp, said nothing of his own hopes, but smiled to himself; he was eagerly looking forward to seeing the bark lie anchored in the harbor, and to meeting Frontin. Surely Frontin must hear those shots, and the brazen shouts of Deakin, and the wild yells in which the other men joined!

As the five went down-stream, the huge Bostonnais glared at the thick forest which closed in everything, and cursed the Indians who did not appear.

"Why aren't the red devils ready to meet us?" he roared forth at length, as they came to a bit of open shore, girded by trees and bushes. "They've never failed afore this! They bring down the furs, camp in a village somewhere near at hand, across the bay, and keep scouts posted for first sight o' me. Blood and wounds, where are the red dogs? Ahoy, ye rogues! Wake up!"

From the green trees that closed down like a wall upon the bank of the river came a low and mocking burst of laughter. The five men halted, staring about in startled astonishment. Swift on the heels of the laugh rose a voice in English:

"Thanks for warning us, Moses Deakin! At him, lads."

The trees vomited powder-smoke, the roar of fusils echoed up, then a riot of figures came bursting forth from ambush. The man in front of Crawford fell, riddled by balls. The huge figure of Deakin swayed and tottered and crashed to earth; the man at Deakin's heels screamed out as his skull was split by a cutlass-stroke. Then Crawford and the other man remaining were down under a mass of assailants, and eager hands bound them fast. So swift and deadly was the surprize that not a blow was struck in return.

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[*] Often spelled "Munk," but the man himself wrote it as above. He should know. See Hakluyt Society publications, 1897. Vol. II.

Deakin, unconscious from a bullet that had raked across this brow, was bound hand and foot, then lifted and carried off. After him Crawford and the remaining man were dragged, the two dead men being left where they lay. Crawford stared at his captors in stupefied bewilderment. Frontin, indeed! These were utter strangers to him, yet English by their talk, and in command of them one Captain Moon. The name struck enlightenment into him. Aboard the prize he had heard Smithsend mention the little frigate *Perry*, under this Captain Moon—a unit of the company's fleet which had presumably foundered in the straits.

Crawford stared yet harder when the party emerged from the trees and came out upon the shores of the land-locked harbor. There, inside the north point, lay the broken wreck of a little frigate, beyond doubt the *Perry;* she had split her keel on the rocks outside and had staggered in past the entrance, a total loss. Waiting beside the huge piles of salvaged barrels and goods were Indians—Crees and Assiniboines—fifty of them at least, who had come from afar up-country with Winter beaver; they were lordlier men than the tribes who lived close to the bay. Perhaps they had been friends to Moses Deakin in other days, but now their prodigality of blankets and gewgaws showed that Moon had spent precious salvage to win them over.

It became evident that Moon had interrupted a council to go and lay his ambush. Now he gave his men swift orders, and with a lieutenant went to rejoin the waiting braves who sat in serried ranks.

Deakin was placed against a tree and lashed fast to it; Crawford was dragged to one adjoining; then Deakin's one surviving man broke free and made a dash for safety. He was shot down before he had gone twenty feet, and died there.

Crawford offered no resistance, and was glad enough to be taken for one of Deakin's followers lest worse befall him. If he were posted in Boston as a pirate, news of him must have reached London ere this. He stood bound to the tree, and surveyed the scene before him, while Moses Deakin hung in his lashings and the eighteen men who had survived the wreck sat around talking and smoking, and watched their leaders parleying with the redskins.

Moon, speaking in mingled French and English, demanded that the Indians supply him with canoes and guides down the coast, and that they follow to Nelson with their beaver. There was some hitch about this, and Crawford could not discover what it was; neither could Moon, until at last a chief arose, threw aside his blanket, and spoke in excellent French:

"We have a message for the 'Big Bear,'" and the chief pointed to the figure of Moses Deakin. "We have traded with the Bostonnais because the *Anglais* have not come here. Now the *Anglais* have very strong medicine. They have destroyed the ship of the Big Bear and killed his men and have captured him. We shall trade with them, and bring the packs of castor from our camp across the bay. But first we must give this message to the Big Bear. This message has been brought by our brothers the Crees from far away, who had it from a nation called Sauteurs, or Chippewas, who had it from another nation called Nadouisioux. If this message is not delivered to the Big Bear, our father Kitchimanitou who lives in the sun will be displeased and will hide his face from us, because this message comes from the Star Woman."

At this name, Crawford started.

"Big Bear is a captive and is to be hanged," said Moon, who did not quite know what to make of this talk about a message.

"That is good," responded the chief. "But first let him receive this message, if he desires to accept it."

Moon had no choice but to obey, and ordered his men to throw water over the senseless Deakin. Crawford watched in wondering surmise. Beyond a doubt, the Star Woman was no myth but a real person! Beyond a doubt, Deakin's insolent message had gone to her, passed from tribe to tribe —and the answer was here to be delivered!

Now Moon strode over to the two captives, gave Crawford a curious glance, and then turned his attention to Deakin. The latter, under the impact of icy water from the bay, was glaring and blinking around, helpless to move; a furious thing he was, and grim to behold, for all his grizzled beard was dribbled and matted with blood from his wounded forehead. Moon stood laughing at him.

"'Twas kind of ye to give us warning wi' shout and shot!" he exclaimed. "Well, Moses Deakin, shalt have thy head lying in salt when we leave here! The company hath a hundred pound on those mustachios. And why? For that broadside ye poured into us last year i' the straits, and killed poor Cap'n Allen—aye, into a royal navy ship, too! Dost mind how ye slid out from the bergs and poured in shot, and went scooning down the wind and away? Aye, and now that work will cost ye a head."

Moses Deakin spat at his tormentor.

"That for ye, and the pox to boot!" he roared. "Ye'll never have my head, for it's no hand of man can bring me to death, but only the gift of a woman."

Deakin swallowed hard, and then changed front suddenly as he recollected himself.

"Hark, cap'n! We be from the south, wi' great news. Iberville ha' whipped the company's fleet, and by now is master of Nelson——"

"Excellent!" exclaimed the company's skipper, laughing. "What else, liar?"

"Nay, 'tis truth! Ask Crawford, here. And what hope have ye, with your ship gone? There is one man can guide ye out, can bring ye safe south again to New Severn or Albany—and that's Moses Deakin. Come, cap'n! I'll bargain with 'ee——"

Captain Moon roared with laughter, whereat Deakin lost his temper and Moon roared anew.

"Iberville, indeed! There are no French on the bay, ye rascal pirate. If they were, they'd be swept away quick enough——"

This disbelief maddened Deakin, who cursed and raved like a maniac, until after a moment the skipper quieted him with a word.

"These redskins have a message for ye from one called the Star Woman. Do ye want it or not, afore we hang ye?"

Deakin stared, swallowed his wrath, sobered suddenly.

"Be that truth?"

"Aye." Moon surveyed him curiously. "Who's this Star Woman?"

"Sink me if I know," growled Deakin, with a sidelong glance at Crawford.

Moon shrugged, and ordered his men to loose both prisoners from the trees.

This was done. Their arms were then tied, and they were led to the circled rank; of red warriors who met Deakin's glare with impassive countenances. Deakin and Crawford sat down, with Moon beside them, and the company men clustered behind.

"No talking to 'em," warned Moon. "What's that fellow getting out the pipe for?"

"Smoke the sun, most like," growled Deakin.

Indeed, the leading Cree chief had produced a much-adorned calumet, and now proceeded to smoke the sun, which had nothing whatever to do with a peace-smoke and was only done on occasions of solemnity. Presenting the calumet thrice to the rising sun, he then held it aloft in both hands and followed with it the course of the sun in the sky, chanting a prayer for happiness and favor; this done, he smoked for a moment and handed the pipe to another chief, who repeated the ceremony.

Half a dozen chiefs in all went through this procedure, then the pipe was laid away, not being handed to the white men. The Cree chief produced a bundle of close tied skins, and stood up to address Moses Deakin:

"My brother Big Bear gave us a message to deliver, long ago. That message has been delivered. Here is the answer to that message. The hands of my brother Big Bear are tied. I give this message to the hand of my brother the *Anglais*, that he may bring it to the eye of Big Bear."

Moon stepped forward to take the roll of skins from the chief. At this moment Crawford, who was intent on the ceremony, was startled to catch the voice of Deakin at his ear.

"Quick! When I grab 'un, kick fusils into water."

It was no time to question whatever desperate plan Deakin had in mind, or how he was to grab any one with his arms bound. Crawford glanced around. He perceived that the company men, grouped behind and to one side, since there was scant room on the shore for them, had stacked their fusils in two piles at the edge of the water. The guns were but ten feet distant.

Crawford gathered his muscles in readiness to spring, and then waited.

Moon took the bundle of skins from the chief, turned, and stood frowning. Then he unsheathed his knife, sat down so that

Deakin was on one side of him and the circle of redskins on the other, and cut the thongs that bound the skins.

"Aye," said Deakin, his wide nostrils flaring eagerly. "Open it!"

The skipper did so, disclosing inner wrappings of doe-skin, likewise tied. These gave to a third wrapping—this time of soft, thick gray fur that drew from Moon an exclamation of astonishment, for it was white beaver. The Indians, no less than the white men, were watching with intense interest, and a chorus of grunts came from them at sight of the white beaver-pelt. Then, as Moon drew this open, to disclose the heart of the whole thing, white men and red stared in silence—the one in puzzled wonder, the other in dread comprehension.

For the message from the Star Woman was a short, heavy arrow with fine, thin head of barbed-iron. The arrow was painted red. The insolent message of Moses Deakin had been answered, significantly enough, by a war-arrow.

"What's it mean?" demanded Moon, staring.

Deakin caught his breath for sheer rage, unable to speak. He knew well enough that his dreaming had crushed down in this moment, with this message of death displayed to all eyes. Undoubtedly he had expected a very different sort of message. Perhaps he had thought that, under its influence, the redskins would rush to his aid. Now, however, in those bronzed features circled around he saw nothing but cold hostility. Big Bear had lost his medicine, since the *Anglais* had overcome him; more, the Star Woman had doomed him to death. This was no matter for the chiefs to take part in; theirs only to shun this doomed creature, shun him utterly, leave him to meet the fate which the dreaded Star Woman had decreed to him.

All this Moses Deakin beheld in the ring of faces, while Moon frowned down at the arrow and the white beaver-pelt. Then, suddenly, the bloodshot eyes of Moses Deakin dilated; his face under the matted beard purpled, knotted muscles pulsed on his brow, and his huge shoulders heaved up.

"Ready, Crawford!" burst from him, as the sea-rotted hemp broke away from his mighty arms. "Blood and wounds—got 'un!"

And with one hand he seized Moon by the neck, drawing him close, while the other paw gripped the knife in Moon's hand.

VIII

[illegible] CRAWFORD, despite bound arms, shot to his feet.

No one, save the watching, impassive redskins, realized what was happening. The company men behind Deakin and Crawford could only see the former seize their skipper, while the latter leaped up and darted to the piles of fusils, and began to kick these into the water. Then, indeed, the men sprang up shouting and cursing—but the brazen voice of Moses Deakin bellowed over them and held them motionless:

"Quiet, ye dogs! Make a move and your skipper dies!"

Lieutenant and men huddled there, staring, all adread; and no wonder. There appeared something unearthly and frightful about this huge, shaggy, blood-smeared figure of a man that had suddenly burst his bonds and uprisen before them like some prehistoric monster, holding or rather hugging to himself, bear-fashion, the frantically writhing but silent Captain Moon—gripping the man's whole throat and neck in that huge, gnarled paw, lifting him from his feet, glaring above him at the staring men.

The Indians sat motionless, still tense from the sight of that war-arrow, taking no interest or share in the affairs of the white men.

"To me, Crawford!" rang the stentorian voice.

Crawford had accomplished his task, and now came back to the side of Deakin, while Moon's men still stared, not daring to move lest the knife plunge into their skipper. To be a company captain meant something; each captain was to the company men, even to his own lieutenants, as a little god, something a trifle more than human, whose slightest word was law ordained.

With his knife, Deakin swiftly slashed the bonds of Crawford.

"Weapons—then to the trees."

Free, Crawford uttered one short, sharp laugh and then leaped at the men who backed from him. From one he caught a hangar, from the gaping lieutenant's hand a gold-decked rapier, perhaps brought out from London town as a gift for Governor

Bailey at Nelson. Then back to Deakin, who was now retreating slowly toward the edge of the trees, backing around the circle of intent redskins, snarling as he gripped his limp captive.

Then from the lieutenant a burst of horrified words:

"The cap'n—dead— At them—cut them off!"

Indeed, what had been Captain Moon was now a poor dead thing, head horribly askew in that fierce grip. The men's stupefaction and bewilderment fled. A yell burst from them, and they flooded forward. Deakin dropped his victim and seized the hangar that Crawford thrust at him.

"Too late!" he snarled. "Another minute——"

Too late indeed; Moses Deakin had defeated himself by killing his hostage. A pistol roared, and Deakin staggered as the ball struck him in the thigh. Crawford might have run for it, but that was not Crawford's way; a laugh broke on his lips as he saw the out-spread men trying to cut off their escape down the shore, closing in around them. The Bostonnais, knife in one hand and hangar in the other, stood like a bear at bay. Now Crawford made one swift effort to stay the onrush.

"Hold, men!" His voice drove out at them. "Your fleet's destroyed—the *Hampshire* sunk, the other ships taken or wrecked, Fort Nelson captured! Your one chance is to——"

A howl of fury drowned his words, and the company men closed in, wielding hangars, knives, clubbed fusils, anything and everything. Deakin's hand moved, and the knife sang through the air; the lieutenant, blade through throat, pitched down and moved no more.

Then Crawford saw why those fusils had been kicked into the water, for with their firearms the enemy would have picked off the two and shot them down. Now, standing back to back, Deakin and Crawford met the rush with whistling hangar and delicate rapier, and as the maddened crowd closed in blindly, men died by point and edge, for the only cool heads there were the two who faced their doom unafraid. Rapier slithered in and out, hangar crashed and whirled and crashed again, and the laugh of Crawford echoed the roaring bellow of the Bostonnais, while the ranks of redskins, leaping up, watched the fight with gleaming eyes and low grunts of excitement.

The circle of company men soon had enough of this, for three of them were gasping at death and others were bloody and they fell back, yelling one at another to close in yet none caring to be the first. Deakin bawled a laugh at them, pressing one hand to his thigh to stop the rushing blood; but Crawford, eying that ring of fierce men, knew that there was but one end to this matter, and smiled thinly.

"Your prophecy was right, Moses Deakin," he said, panting a little. "Had it not been for that gift from the Star Woman, these redskins would take a hand——"

Deakin hurled curses at the watching chiefs, broke off short to dodge a crudely hurled knife—and then the circle was closing in again. This time more cautiously, clubbed fusils and bits of wreckage battering down while the wielders stood beyond reach of hangar and rapier. One man came in too far, and Deakin plunged at him, splitting his skull; then a gun-butt struck the giant across the head and staggered him, and like wolves they leaped upon him and had him down, and the writhing, heaving mass of men went rolling across the sand.

Crawford, ringed in, stood alone. An oar swept at him, and he leaped into action, dodging it, throwing himself at the circle of men around him, rapier licking in and out and sending two of them coughing out their life—but a hangar crashed on the thin blade and shivered it, and they had him down. Those men worked their own ill, however, for crowding one another too close to get in straight blows, they gave Crawford a chance to work free, and he seized it. Next instant he was on his feet, with all of them dragging at him, his fists hammering them back; and he broke them and found himself clear. Clear, yes—but at the water's edge, with the icy bay behind him and the ring of sullen, fury-filled men closing him in.

They were content to let him rest there a moment, for into the edge of their circle broke the writhing heap of men above Moses Deakin. Twice Deakin hurled them clear, and twice they were in upon him ere he could rise; then, streaming with blood, battered and blind and a fearful thing to see, the giant came to one knee, gripping a screaming man in either hand. An inarticulate bellow frothing foam from his red lips, Deakin tore out the throat of the man in his right hand, and yelled madly as the blood spurted.

The other man, shrieking mad panic, caught something from the sand in groping fingers and drove it home. Deakin lifted his great red paw and struck the man down, then clutched at his breast. A terrible gasp broke from him, and he fell backward, and from his breast stood out the red shaft of the Star Woman's gift. There died Moses Deakin of Boston.

"Now the other—at him!" swept up the yell, and the circle closed in.

They were to rue that moment of rest, for Crawford leaped, swooped upon the nearest man, tore a hangar from him, and drove at the circle with flashing blade and new strength behind it. He cut down one man, then another, while gun-butts and clubs flailed at him; they closed in upon him, around him, striking at his back, staggering him, blows hurtling on him and knives biting. Then the steel whirled and bit at them again, and with the lust of battle firing his brain, Crawford broke them, went reeling through them, came to a halt at the water's edge and faced them defiantly, half-blinded by the blood in his eyes. From his lips broke the wild yell of the Iroquois, the fighting yell of the Mohawk tribe:

"Sassakouay! Sassakouay!"

That yell lifted and swirled up among the trees, and the dread, well-known sound of it evoked a wildly startled response of whoops from the watching chieftains. At this, the circle of blood-maddened men hung back, thinking that the redskins were about to take them in rear, but soon recovered confidence. They spat curses, and lifted weapons anew.

Crawford faced them, yet seeing them not. He was spent, and knew it well, and queer visions came whirling at him as he reeled there, dazed and battered and bleeding. He saw the face of Iberville, saw it greet him with one flashing smile ere it faded; he saw Moses Deakin, wide-nostriled, glaring upon him as the shade of Aias glared balefully upon the crafty Odysseus; he saw the faces of dead men whom he had known in other days, drawing in upon him, fading, passing on.

And as he stood there, leaning dazedly upon the hangar, the Star of Dreams came out from under his shirt and swayed. Sight of that green jewel halted the in-drawing circle of men, halted them in sheer astonishment, held them staring for an instant. Then Crawford's vision cleared, he saw them charging him, saw one wild ruffian heave up a musket to drive down upon him—and with a laugh he whirled up the hangar and sent it point first into the ruffian's breast.

Then they closed in upon him as he swayed, empty-handed. And as they came, it seemed to him that he saw the face of Frontin, and heard the voice of Frontin ringing in his ears; and he took it for a welcoming to the other world—the world beyond the horizon—as he went down under the blows.

IX

ON THE shore of the land-locked harbor at the mouth of the Danish River, where after another snow or two was to rise the palisaded front of Fort Churchill, was now being enacted a curious scene before the astonished and startled eyes of the assembled redskins, who had held their places only from a sense of dignity.

Lying bound at the water's edge were seven men—all that remained from the company of the wrecked frigate in the shallows. The others lay as they had fallen from the savage attack of those men bursting from the trees—Frontin and Sir Phelim Burke, with those who followed them. Now Crawford, helped by two of his men, doused the icy water over his face and head, then rose, dripping, and gripped the hands of his two friends.

"A miracle!" he said.

"—— a bit of it," exclaimed Sir Phelim eagerly. "We saw that canoe of yours heading north along the shallows—Frontin declared that he could see you, through the glass. So Serigny gave us a boat and we came after you. Did ye not hear the gun fired?"

Crawford stared at them.

"Serigny—gave you a boat? After capturing you?"

"He wanted the corvette," said Frontin, frowning a little. "My faith, he meant to hang the lot of us—but I had a talk with him." For an instant, the cynical visage of the man was clouded by an unwonted embarrassment. "You comprehend, cap'n, in another day and another world I had another name likewise. Well, to the —— with explanations! Facts are facts. I talked with Serigny, and he gave us a boat, though he'd not give up the corvette. So there we were, and here we are. Ye'd better heed those redskins, and let talk wait."

Crawford nodded. His head fairly clear, and for the moment ignoring his hurts, he forced himself to stride across the sand to where the circle of chieftains waited. They drew together, staring at him, staring again at the blazing green star which had come from his torn shirt; and when he sat down and spoke to them in French, they followed suit and listened to him.

"My brothers have seen that the medicine of Big Bear failed, and that the medicine of the *Anglais* also failed. Why? Because of my medicine," and he held up the emerald jewel.

Grunts broke from the warriors.

"I have come to smoke the calumet with my brothers."

There was a silence, while Frontin and Sir Phelim and the other men drew in behind Crawford. Then, because they had no more tobacco, and had not yet obtained any from the salvage, an Assiniboine chief produced a calumet and stuffed the bowl with the fragrant *sagacomi** from his pouch; when he had lighted it, he handed it to Crawford, who puffed and returned it.

So the council was held and the calumet smoked, and Crawford faced an instant decision with characteristic readiness. He had already learned from Deakin that if Indians were here, they would be here only to bring the message from the Star Woman; as a rule they came to the bay in May, and only that message would force them to delay here this long while. Therefore, it was obvious that these chiefs were wildly anxious to begone home.

The leading chiefs of the two tribes made Crawford a short address, then awaited his answer. He let them wait, made his decision, then stiffly rose and faced them.

"My brothers, you know what has happened here, but you do not know why I have come here. Look at this."

Once more he held up the emerald star.

"I have come because the Star Woman sent this to me. I am going home with you. You will take me to your own country, and send me to the Sauteurs, and they will send me on to the Star Woman."

Now there were stifled grunts of amazement and awe. Crawford continued swiftly.

"My brothers, you have brought beaver for Big Bear. It is of no use to me, but I will buy it from you. I will give you all these goods from the wrecked ship, such as I do not want. Then you will cache the beaver here and leave it until next year, or until I come again. Tomorrow we will arrange these things, and then we will leave for your own country. Go to your camp, and come back here tomorrow. I have spoken."

There was silence, while Crawford's men stared at one another, and the wounded men by the water groaned in their bonds; then with silent acceptance of this scheme the chiefs departed.

No sooner was the assemblage over than Crawford swung up and faced his men. He looked at Frontin and met a dry smile; he looked at Sir Phelim and met a twinkle of the eye. He looked at his men and then laughed suddenly.

"Listen! My lads, we have no ship. Our seafaring days are ended, for we have crossed that horizon. Here is a chance that has come to me to go farther, to go where few men have gone, to see what no white man has seen! I am going into the unknown country with these Indians. I am going to find this Star Woman, if she exists. I don't ask ye to come with me; there's naught for any of you at the end of this journey. If ye come, I'll be glad. If ye want to go down to Nelson, go freely. I'll loose those prisoners and let the rascals go, in any case. Talk it over with your Irishry, Sir Phelim. You, Dickón, talk it over with your comrades——"

"—— take the talk!" and Sir Phelim laughed. "These Burkes will do as I say, Hal Crawford, and ye know my mind already. We're with ye, if it's into —— itself!"

"Aye, cap'n!" spoke up the man Dickon, while the other Englishmen grunted approval. "The horizon be good one place as another—and we be your men!"

Crawford looked at Frontin, his blue eyes sparking.

"And you, old buccaneer? Wilt go to Nelson and join Serigny? Or——"

Frontin shrugged, but his affected cynicism could not hide the quick glow in his dark visage.

"I? Bah! Don't be a fool. I go to get some soup over the fire, and advise you to do the same."

And a roar of laughter broke the tension.

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* Author doesn't know. La Potherie calls it: "*une herbe assez agréable*," so it wouldn't be willow bark.

The Camp-Fire

A MEETING-PLACE for READERS, WRITERS and ADVENTURERS

ON THE occasion of his first story in our magazine Ernest Douglas follows Camp-Fire custom by rising to introduce himself to all of us. The story he mentions was "Prester John," afterward issued in book form by Dodd, Mead & Company under the title "The Diamond Pipe."

Jerome, Arizona.

My own adventures have been few and unexciting, but my acquaintanceship among pioneers of the Southwest, people who helped to wrest this land from Indians and outlaws, is perhaps exceptionally wide. I barely escaped being born in a covered wagon *en route* from Texas to Arizona. My actual birthplace was a tent on a homestead on the lower Gila River, for I arrived before my father had time to build the one-room adobe shack which was the first home that I can remember.

FLOODS in the Gila washed out the brush dams of the settlers faster than they could be built, so the irrigation project was soon abandoned and my father turned from farming to raising cattle on the range. Almost before I was able to toddle I was put on a horse and became a "cowboy." Until I was sixteen practically my only associates were cowpunchers—American and Mexican—and Indians. But I was too much of a student, a reader, to become a "top hand." My brother, two years younger, easily excelled me in roping, tying steers, riding broncos, and other rodeo accomplishments.

So my parents agreed that I was destined to be a "city man" and the family moved to Phœnix that I might receive a better education than could be provided at the little unpainted schoolhouse on the Gila. I finished grammar school, then was sent to business college for a few months. But in the meantime I had got a job as carrier for a newspaper. I hung around the news-room, bothering everybody with questions, until in desperation the editor sent me out to collect hotel arrivals. After that there was no more school for me. I have been hammering a typewriter ever since as reporter, editor, legislative correspondent, and finally as manager of my own paper in what I believe to be the most picturesque mining camp in the world.

My greatest regret is that I did not live the adventures and see the things my father experienced and saw as a young man on the old cattle trails between Texas and the Northern markets.

One of my ambitions is to write stories embodying the romance of copper mining. That is a field almost untouched in literature. But somehow whenever I steal time from my newspaper work to venture into fiction, a cowboy or a frontier sheriff creeps in as hero. Those were the kind of people I knew as a boy; it is only in the last six or seven years that I have had any extensive contact with miners and mining men.

Ever since the first number of *Adventure* was issued and I became absorbed in that African romance by John Buchan (the title but not the story has been forgotten), I have longed to write a story good enough to appear in its pages. Now I'm invited to make a bow before the Camp-Fire bunch. Could a greater compliment be paid any writer?—Ernest Douglas.

THE following was sent to me personally by Meigs O. Frost of our writers' brigade, but it ought to be passed on to all of you. Let us hope that by the time this reaches you General Christmas will be entirely recovered. These are of the adventurers par excellence, Lee Christmas, Guy R. Molony, Tracy Richardson, and this little drama in which all three played their parts as was to be expected will be of interest to all of you.

New Orleans.

I thought this little story I covered Saturday would probably hold some personal interest for you, even aside from the fact that it was General Lee Christmas' copy of *Adventure* that Colonel Molony read while the surgeons cut into his arm and pumped out that pint and a quarter of blood to save his old compadre's life.

These old-timers come up to the mark with a grin when the whistle blows, don't they!—Meigs O. Frost.

MR. FROST'S article, which follows, appeared in the New Orleans *States* of August 5th, 1923:

The man that General Lee Christmas marked off his muster-roll as dead, at the taking of Ceiba port nearly fifteen years ago, came back to save his old chief's life in New Orleans Saturday.

That man, then a machine gunner in the far-off days of Honduras and its revolutions, is now Colonel Guy R. Molony, superintendent of New Orleans police.

From his veins, Saturday, a pint and a quarter of rich blood was pumped into the wasted, thinned veins of the old soldier of fortune, as General Christmas lay at his little residence. At the close of the operation, Dr. J. C. Cole, personal physician to General Christmas, said—

"The transfusion of Colonel Molony's blood has given General Christmas a far better chance for recovery than he had prior to that transfusion."

AN HOUR before that operation, the old soldier had lain in his front bedroom, white of face, wasted of body, his pale blue eyes looking calmly and expressionlessly from the pallid face that was further whitened by a bristle of snowy stubble.

Within an hour after the transfusion, a flush of color had come back to General Christmas' face. The surgeons in attendance had sewn up the incision in his left arm into which Colonel Molony's blood had been pumped.

And on another bed in the back room, the same surgeons were sewing up the inch-long gash in Colonel Molony's right arm—the lancet-cut from which the vein had been tapped. Mrs. Christmas had sped down the hall and was standing over him, trying to thank him for his gift of blood that had saved her husband's life.

"Aw, shucks," grinned Colonel Molony disparagingly, "he'd have done as much for me, wouldn't he?"

IT WAS back in 1910, on Glover's Reef, off the coast of Honduras, that Guy R. Molony, machine gunner, then a veteran of the Boer War, first met his chief, General Lee Christmas. The years of their association in Latin-American revolutions read like sheer romance of gallant adventurings. They had fought and feasted together; they had known jungle hardships and revelry of captured towns. They had been chased by cruisers and gunboats—they had done some little chasing themselves.

At the taking of Ceiba—still a historic page in the annals of Latin-American revolutions—young Molony and a squad of machine gunners were cut off on the beach by an enemy force. Through a long day of burning heat and a jammed machine gun, they lay, parched with thirst, fighting with rifles and pistols, out on the beach behind hastily reared ramparts of sand. As darkness fell they cut their way through. Guy Molony, sunburnt, ragged, red-eyed, stepped up to his chief and saluted.

"——, Molony," said General Christmas, "I marked you off the muster-roll hours ago!"

THEY took Ceiba side by side. They ruled the army in Honduras, Lee Christmas as general, Guy R. Molony as colonel and chief of the artillery school he established. As partners their adventures run the gamut of the fantastic. Then, when after the World War from which Guy Molony emerged a colonel of field artillery and promptly became New Orleans superintendent of police, Lee Christmas worked at his mechanical inventions and his oil development plans in Guatemala, and they were thrown apart.

A MONTH ago Lee Christmas came back from New York to the modest home he had established in New Orleans—half of a little two story house at 7732 Sycamore Street—and he came back a sick man. Chagres fever had sapped his strength. Sprue, the dreaded tropical complaint, sapped it further.

Then to his house on Saturday morning came Tracy Richardson, another soldier of fortune who had been schooled under the old chief. Machine-gunner, too, was he in Honduras. When America failed to enter the World War fast enough to suit him, he enlisted in the Princess Pats, and fought Germany with Canada for Great Britain. He transferred to America's army and rose to be lieutenant-colonel and aerial gunnery expert in the A. E. F. under Pershing. He was staying in New Orleans, heard of Lee Christmas' illness and went to visit his old chief.

HE TALKED a while with the white-faced old soldier stretched on that bed in the little home in Sycamore Street. He went out of the house, white-faced himself, and talked with Dr. Cole.

"The best chance for recovery is a blood-transfusion," said the doctor.

Straight to Superintendent Molony's office at police headquarters, went Richardson.

"Come on," said he. "It's you and me for Touro Infirmary."

Swift question and answer—and they went.

There Saturday afternoon Dr. John A. Lansford, pathologist, tested their blood. Richardson's was not the type that could be used on the dying chief.

"——," said Richardson disgustedly. He stood in the Touro corridor chatting with Colonel Molony.

"I reckon it's up to you, Guy," he said.

And it was up to Guy.

Out from the pathological laboratory came an assistant to Dr. Lansford.

"Colonel Molony's blood is the right type," came the report.

Guy Molony grinned.

"The general doesn't know what a trick they'll be playing on him," he chuckled. "When he gets some of this police-chief blood in him, he'll be chasing some crook over a ten-foot fence."

Then—

"When does the show start?" he asked.

They told him. He went to his machine and drove straight out to the Christmas home.

"Listen," he said to the doctors as they started to work on his right arm. "I don't mind you doing your stuff, but don't ask me to look at it."

Dr. Cole, Dr. Russell E. Stone and Dr. J. W. A. Smith grinned. One of them handed him the last issue of *Adventure*. Stretched on the bed, he riffled the magazine's pages with one hand, while the doctors worked on the other arm.

"Get me a cigar out of my coat?" he asked. "I can't smoke a pipe here."

And with cigar alight, with head turned away from the surgeons, he read the adventures of fiction—he who had lived so many of them in his own life—he whose act in giving his blood to save his old commander's life was as thrilling as that of any of those heroes of fiction with which he kept his mind off the surgeon's work.

They deadened the arm with novocain. They opened an inch-long gash in the flesh at the inside of the elbow. They raised the vein and fixed the tourniquet. They cut the vein and adjusted the tube and watched while the pint and a quarter of red blood was pumped out into the glass container by Guy Molony's heart-beat. And through it all Guy Molony smoked and read and jested with those who stood around the bed.

"Hadn't you better get a wash-tub?" he chaffed the surgeons, as the glass jar slowly filled, while the assistants stirred in the solution that prevented the blood from coagulating.

AND in the front room practically the same scene was being enacted as they opened the thin, white, wasted arm on General Lee Christmas to receive that blood. The man who laughed when they tortured him in Honduras long years ago by burning the soles of his feet with hot irons, the man who faced a firing squad, himself gashed and wounded, and said grimly: "Go ahead and shoot, but don't bury me. I want the buzzards to eat me. I don't want to rest under any ground that has your kind of double-crossing vermin on top of it!"—that man watched with expressionless pale-blue eyes while they cut into his arm and arranged the transfusion apparatus.

Then came the transfusion.

As though by a miracle the white face and blue lips of General Lee Christmas were suffused with color. Drop by drop, drawn by gravity as the glass jar with its long rubber container was held high, the blood of the colonel entered the veins of the dying general.

BACK in his room at the other end of the tiny hall, Guy Molony lay on the bed, his arm bandaged, a whimsical smile twisting his lips.

"You look like you were expecting something," said one of the little group around the bed.

"I am," said the superintendent of police. "I'm waiting for one of those doctors to lay a wet towel over the general's nose or put a cold instrument on his tummy or something like that. Then you'll hear the most wonderful language you ever heard. You ought to hear him explode, once!"

And presently General Lee Christmas exploded.

It wasn't a very loud explosion. He was too weak for that. But it was an explosion, undeniably.

He raised a hand and began to scratch his forehead, his white hair, the back of his neck. Every nerve was tingling with the influx of fresh and healthy blood.

But— " —— it, I'm itching all over," complained General Lee Christmas. Then:

"Hey, tell Guy he'd ought to get rid of his fleas before he came here. Ask him what the —— he means by not gettin' rid of 'em."

THEY relayed the message. Guy Molony grinned.

"I told you," he said. "He's getting well. You tell him for me that if I've got any fleas, I got 'em in his own back yard!"

Which, too, was duly relayed. And the response was prompt.

"You tell that big Irishman," said General Christmas, "that when I get on my feet again I'm going to reorganize his whole —— police department for him."

The face of a woman who sat at the head of the bed was illumined by a smile. It's a pretty face. Ida Cullotta of Porto Cortez was a beauty when General Lee Christmas married. Her brown hair and blue eyes were lighted now with glad relief.

"He's getting better, all right," she murmured.

And he was.

Down in the front yard 7-year-old Dominick Lee Christmas was playing contentedly. They'd told him they weren't going to take daddy to the hospital—so everything was all right. If daddy didn't have to go to the hospital, daddy was going to get well. That was all there was about that.

"HE'LL need some more transfusions," said Dr. Cole, emerging from the general's bedroom. "Colonel Molony has volunteered more if they're needed, but we can't take too much from one man. If any friends of General Christmas want to donate some blood, and will come to the Touro Infirmary laboratory, I'll be glad to have them tested for type. This one transfusion may be enough. But with the enemia following sprue, we may need several."

The group of friends who had been standing about volunteered for tests. Others who wish to may report at Touro Infirmary.

And then, as General Christmas lay, his face mantled with color, Colonel Molony came in and shook hands with him.

"Any time, general," said he. "Forget it!" For the general had started to voice gruff thanks. "You'd have done as much for me, wouldn't you? And the next time I come out here, get the fleas out of your back yard!"

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Captain Ralph R. Guthrie rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

Headquarters 2nd Corps Area
Office of the Signal Officer
Governors Island, N. Y.

Upon request I take pleasure in compounding a felony by submitting a short autobiographical sketch, along with my first crash into the pages of this periodical. Mr. Hoffman says "stand up and let the spotlight play upon you for a few seconds," which is rather awkward for the victim but not so bad as if he said "stand up and be sentenced."

THE prisoner before the bar admits having been born up-State, in New York, but pleads that this offense was nullified by the subsequent action of his parents who took him, at the age of two, out into the sand-hills of western Nebraska to bring him up in town. The town chosen was twenty-two miles long and a hundred and fifty yards wide and inhabited most by prairie dogs and ground owls. The most influential citizen at that time was a chap by the name of Rattle Snake—a fair mixer when things went nicely with him, but a bad customer in a fight.

As time went on, the defendant was suspected of being erudite and sent to the Merna, Nebraska, high school and later exiled to Bellevue College, Omaha, for observation and treatment. Here he received the degree of "Harmless" in Latin and "The most timorous of animals indigenous to these parts," by the professor of natural science.

BUMPED around a good deal after that—book-agent, packing-house laborer, farm-hand, engraver, sport writer, vice-president of a business college in Concordia, Kan. All this in early post-college days. Later reporter for the Kansas City *Journal* for eleven years.

The war came along, picking up odds and ends. The prisoner at the bar joined as private in the Signal Corps. Later dug up a commission. Has still got it and treasures it second only to the first story which apeared over his name in the sport column of the Omaha *World Herald* in 1903. I thank you.—RALPH R. GUTHRIE.

A PICTURE of old-time conditions in windjammers, by a comrade who knows:

Lake Charles, Louisiana.

Bill Adams was right that a "seaman" and a "sailor" are not exactly the same. I sailed out of England for Australia and India in the early eighties in windjammers (limejuicers) which were called "peasoup ships;" some called the life on board "hunger and lice." After we had cleared the Channel, every morning we had to go aft to the bread-locker where steward would shove his scoop in the bread-bin and weigh out one pound, crums, maggots (yes, I mean maggots and plenty of them) and all; and that was the day's ration. We called them biscuits, hardtack. Some of it had made a cruise or two around the world. And when the cook sometimes opened up a barrel of salt-pork, I ask you old shellbacks that can remember it, did it stink or not? Sometimes you sailed under a skipper who laid in fresh provisions, but it was too often the other way.

AFTER living for several months on salt food and insufficient of that and bad drinking-water and never enough of that, can you wonder that men become sullen, morose and ready to fight any moment, and they do fight often enough.

Now picture to yourself a ship coming home after eighteen months or more; say she is going up the Thames, the pilot is on the bridge, the crew is leaning over the rail hungrily looking at familiar sights as the banks of the river go by, two standing together. "Blime, Scotty, I can taste that 'am and eggs right now. An' aye, cockney lad, but don't forget a wee drop of—ye ken." They laugh and crow like happy children, forgetting the hardships, the past hunger and misery, in the rosy outlook of the "homeward bound." Do you wonder that Jack takes a drink when he comes ashore? Would you not do it; and in the condition he is in physically, just two or three drinks keels him over and he is called "a drunken sailor." I have had twenty years on the briny. I am not guessing.—H. HOLLAND.

A WORD of explanation from Leonard H. Nason as to the use of "Luger" in his story in this issue:

Dedham, Massachusetts.

Since I wrote the story of the Luger, it has been borne upon my mind that the weapon that *Li'l' Joe* admired so much was not a Luger but a Mauser. I am led to this belief because the Luger did not have a detachable stock. Be that as it may, all the German pistols, whether Mauser, Luger or some other make, were known to the soldiers indiscriminately as Lugers, so I have let the yarn go as it was written. When I was at the Third Division reunion in Philadelphia I discussed this matter with a number of men who ought to know, but the discussion ended in a lot of hard luck tales about what had become of the Lugers *they* had had, and the ways they had gone, and what a sad fact it was that the only souvenirs a fightin' man could bring back with him were the cooties.—LEONARD H. NASON.

DYNAMITING graves is quite some job and, in this case, quite a busy one:

Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland.

Although I have been reading your magazine for several years, I never happened to write before, mainly because I am (or was before I joined the service) a rambler. I read a story in the magazine called "The Building of the Dam," by I. M. Nichols. It interested me because I worked at that same dam.

I HAD just left the Swan Falls Dam up the Snake River, where I was running a concrete mixer, and was loafing in Boise when a little stunt happened. I was asking a cop something (I forget what) when a man came up and said:

"I'll bail him out, officer. How much is it?"

I told him I was not getting pinched and he invited me to have a drink (Idaho was wet then). To make a long story short, we got to swapping yarns and he told me he was a carpenter out at Arrow Rock Dam and they needed helpers out there bad. I went out as his helper and worked a few months. His name was Red Jack (his last name I have forgotten) and he was a half-breed Indian and a white man if there ever was one.

The other men lived in different bunk-houses from the Swedes, Polacks, Finns and Hunks, but we could hear them raising —— there every night, and I remember a Swede was shot over a fiddle one night.

One thing I. M. Nichols does not mention is that the little black sticks in the toolshed on the side hill were mainly used for digging graves. There was a private graveyard in the lava rock, and a gang of four men did nothing but dig graves. There was at least one man a day killed on the works, and it was not much worse than some other camps I've been in.—BILL AITON, Co. D., 1st Gas Regiment, C. W. S.

AS TO historical data back of his novelette in this issue a few words from H. Bedford-Jones:

The historical part of this story is drawn from Bacqueville de la Potherie, who took part in the events described. The only English account of which I know is given by A. C. Laut in "The Conquest of the Great Northwest," an astounding example of mistranslation. In nearly all details it is grossly inaccurate; for example, it states that the *Pelican* was dismasted at the first fire—ignoring the whole point of the engagement.

Contemporary place names used: Nelson is York Factory, the Danish River is Churchill. By naming Deakin's ship the *Albemarle*, I tried to account for what is to me a mystery. After the capture of Nelson, Bacqueville loaded the looted furs aboard a ship of this name and lost her trying to get her out of the river. I can find no other mention of any such ship, though I have not seen Iberville's report, which may explain this item.

At this period only one Englishman, Kelsey, had penetrated up-country. I have purposely ignored the fact that Serigny was blown into the Danish River on his way to Nelson. To suit the story it had to be ignored; also, Moon's ship was probably lost in the straits. Otherwise, I think, all details correctly reported.—H. BEDFORD-JONES.

BICYCLE speeding and West African "cops." A little adventure in Lagos:

Baltimore, Maryland.

Brothers: Will you cut another guy in? The heading of "Camp-Fire" says "For readers—" and I have an idea I qualify that far anyway. For the others, well, I might have had an adventure or so, but as far as writing goes, believe me, it can't be did.

DID any of you ever hear of any one being arrested for exceeding the speed-limit on a bicycle? A bunch of us one afternoon decided we'd like to see the suburbs of Lagos, English territory down on the Gold Coast of West Africa (we were there with a miscellaneous cargo on the S. S. *Jalu*—Bull Line), so we chartered Limey bicycles and started out. Now put your imagination to work and let your mind's eye see an average-size "smoke" with a round skull cap, dark blue with three red braid stripes circling it, perched over one ear, a dark-blue coat with shoulder-straps and red braid and other decorations covering it, then knee pants with red braid and barefooted from knee down. Well, they call that get-up a policeman in Lagos, and they are awfully serious and full of dignity.

Now here we come down a little hill, —— bent for election. When a kid, I did my share of A. D. T. messenger service, and I got about as much speed out of a bicycle as the average, but I never was more surprized in my life than I was when this Keystone cop blocked the way and informed us that we were arrested for speeding. Well, with him leading the procession and us trundling those awkward-looking Limey wheels, we four passed from one to another till we reached the hoosgow. There we were entered on the blotter and five shillings demanded of each of us to insure our appearance in court the following day at 9 A. M.

Well, as we were curious to see the wheels of justice go round, we all put in an appearance promptly. The courtroom was packed. Nobody but shines though, and, believe me, for a riot in color, I never saw its equal. Those natives had clothes of every color in the rainbow, and 'twouldn't surprize me if there were not a good many clothes that had the rainbow beat. After so long a time, the Limey judge—the only white man in the place except us—put in an appearance. Our case came up and we were charged with riding a bicycle at an unsafe speed, in a reckless manner and not keeping to the left. After pleading "guilty," we were fined two and six and costs, which took the forfeit we had placed, and were advised by the court to be more careful riding a bicycle and released.

WE HAD about 80 Krooboys aboard to load the cargo of 1,500 mahogany logs. The logs were towed from shore and to the ship by the launch we carried on the for'd well-deck. Took about two weeks to load the logs. At another port a couple of days to load cocoa beans. Then sailed for Boston where we unloaded the bags in 1½ days.

Wish I were a writer. There is excellent material in that trip for a yarn, but this'll have to let me out.

I've been reading *Adventure* for a long time. Seafaring off and on since 1913. Maine to, or almost to, Mexico as sign- and house-painter, steeple-jack, circus concessioner. Am a jack of all trades and, as the saying is, good at none. Maybe. But guess I'm taking up too much of your time.—F. D. BISHOP.

SOMETHING from Gordon Young concerning his new serial beginning in this issue:

Los Angeles.

Some twenty-five years ago I was a kid knocking about on cow-ranches in southern Colorado. Even then the farmers had won the range. But I heard the stories that were told, and saw people who had figured in them. I often saw the nesters drifting by in their covered wagons, their lean wives, always holding babies, gazing with hot, tired eyes at the land; and they fascinated me, though I never liked them. I could not understand them, and why they came. They were aliens. I have tried to put them into "Standish" just about as I saw them.

This is the first Western novel I have written. There was an overflow of material from other sources; but when I began this story it was as if I had tapped a gusher. Faces and incidents boiled up that I had not thought of in twenty years.—GORDON YOUNG.

AS YOU know, we don't feel that Camp-Fire is the place for appeals for financial assistance, but here is the case of a man who lives where there is no money in existence. He wants a boat-sail. There are no shops. His home is in "the most out-of-the-way place in the world." There are only 129 other people in his small world. Nothing grows there that you could make a sail out of. He doesn't specify the kind or size of sail, but there are only eight boats in his world, all small canvas ones, and he'd probably thank Heaven for any kind of sail that could be used on them.

Mind, I'm not asking any one to send him a sail or anything else, nor even recommending it. I don't know Mr. Finch, who tells us about him, so naturally can't vouch for him, though heaven knows I've no reason to suspect him of anything but sincerity and a kindly heart.

But here's Mr. Finch's letter to me and, following it, the letter he is writing about. Captain Dingle's answer was in our March 30th, 1922, issue, on the stands in February. Note that Mr. Glass' letter is dated November 24, 1922, and Mr. Finch's May 14, 1923. I don't know how much time was lost between receiving and writing, but it looks as if it took quite some while to communicate with "the most out-of-the-way place in the world," part way between South America and Africa.

El Dorado, Arkansas.

I am inclosing a letter received from a Mr. Robbert F. Glass of the island of Tristan da Cunha, South Atlantic, in reply to one that I wrote him over a year ago. I have an idea you would like to print a copy of same in Camp-Fire. That is the reason for sending it. I wrote to Mr. Glass as a result of reading Captain Dingle's reply to a query sent him by a reader of *Adventure* to the "Ask Adventure" section of your magazine.

I, LIKE the other fellow, am interested in the out-of-the-way places and wrote out of curiosity, partly also because I am a philatelist or stamp-collector. I wondered what stamps they used out there and found that they don't use any—just a postmark: Tristan da Cunha, South Atlantic, and I am not sure that was stamped on the letter on the island, as it is not dated. I am going to keep the envelop, or cover, as we call them, as a souvenir. I expect to write to Mr. Glass again. You will note that he promises to write again. I believe with Captain Dingle that it is the most out-of-the-way place in the world. No money, no regular mails or source of supply. His request for some one to send him a sail is pathetic and I am interested in it, although I am not a sea-faring man.

Do you think it would be possible to interest a few adventurers of Camp-Fire in some way in getting together and sending him a good small sail? I would be willing to assist in doing so; a few of us might adopt the island as some of the towns in France were adopted during the war. Personally I don't believe I would care to live on a small island overrun with rats unless I had a good reason to want to get out of touch with the rest of the world. I have an idea that I will take up this with some curio collectors through a hobby magazine, if *Adventure* can't handle it, and see what I can do for him.

Personally just at present I have been knocked out for about a month. A young man took a notion as the result of an argument to try to eliminate yours truly by striking me on the left ear and over the left eye with a good-sized club. I was in the hospital nine days and have not started to work as yet but expect to soon.

I believe that the readers of Camp-Fire and "Ask Adventure" would be interested in this confirmation of Captain Dingle's reply to the question about this island. The only objection I can see to this is that that there would be considerable delay, as it would be some time before you would get around to publishing this letter in Camp-Fire and Mr. Glass' boat might be wrecked before we get around to him.

I am enclosing also a copy of his letter that I have made so that if you desire to keep same for future publication, you can do so. I wish you to return the original to me as soon as convenient.—JOS. C. FINCH, Box 1612, El Dorado, Arkansas.

Tristan da Cunha.
Nov. 24, 1922.

In reply to your letter dated 29th of March, 1922, which reached me on the 3rd of November, 1922, and I am pleased to get a letter from friends far away, for we are out of the way from the civilized world altogether and I am pleased to get letters from friends far away.

I WILL now let you know about our lonely island. My grandfather, William Glass, was the first man to settle on the island. We have to depend on passing ships for all our stores and clothing and it is very often six or eight months before we see a ship of any kind and we have to trust to our friends far away. We always get letters from our friends in England once in a year and they always send us small parcels of clothing and groceries and we are very thankful to get them, for the only things that grow on the island are a few potatoes, cabbage, turnips, carrots, beets and onions. We have about 700 sheep, 250 cattle, 150 geese, 400 fowls and a few pigs and the population is 130 men, women and children. We have a church and a school and we have eight small canvas boats and them we make ourselves on the island from the wood we get from the shipwrecks. The island is overrun with rats and they do a lot of damage to the potatoes. We have no shops on the island.

I will write you another letter giving you all the details about the island and what we do, for at present we are busy making boats and building houses. We find it very hard to get sails for our boats. I am building a boat 24 feet long, 5 feet wide and would be pleased if some one would be kind enough to send me a boat-sail. We have no money on the island, but I could send in return for the same some curios from the island.

Hoping to hear from you again, I am,

Your sincere friend,
ROBERT F. GLASS.

P. S.—All letters and parcels address in care of the General Post-Office, London, for to be sent to the island of Tristan da Cunha.

MR. FINCH suggests that we of Camp-Fire "adopt" the island. I've never adopted an island and don't know just how to go about it, but we here in the office are sending Mr. Finch the wherewithal for a piece of that sail. If any of you are similarly moved, please write to Mr. Finch direct. If the idea of "adopting" the island appeals to Camp-Fire, we might ask Mr. Finch to act as an executive committee. Any of you living near him that could also serve on the committee? With communication so slow, there'd be lots of delay in operations, but the idea has its appeal and me, I'm for it personally.

Mr. Finch probably wrote again last Spring, so we may be hearing again from the island before long. I'd like to know more about those 130 people and their life there.

THE international Labor Bureau at Geneva is examining into the question of employment for the 10,000,000 mutilated soldiers of the great war. Ten million.

How many millions were killed? I've forgotten. Most people have forgotten. How many, many million other people have suffered—are still suffering in heart and body as a result of these millions and millions of deaths and mutilations? Who can count them? How many billions of dollars of property have been destroyed by that war? How many more billions of dollars of property have failed to be produced because of that war?

And we human beings had that war when we didn't have to. There is nothing compelling human beings to settle differences of opinion by killing one another in masses. Indeed, we have for centuries provided peaceful machinery for settling differences of opinion and use that machinery as a matter of course instead of killing one another. Provided the difference of opinion happens to be confined to those of us living within some one country. But, quite illogically and quite unnecessarily, if the difference of opinion happens to involve more than one country, we go to killing one another instead.

The reason for this inconsistency is that in domestic disputes the people themselves decide upon the method for settling disputes, prefer a peaceful method and establish the machinery for it. But in international disputes the people themselves, the people as a whole, are not allowed to decide upon the method for settling disputes. The deciding is done by a fraction of one per cent. of the people as a whole, and these few decide upon methods that must every so often end in war.

THIS is, of course, a silly situation, when you come to think of it. Particularly when you remember that the few who are responsible for wars do not do any of the fighting themselves but leave the killing and the dying to the people as a whole.

The plan advanced by ex-Vice-President Marshall is the logical remedy for this absurd and wicked situation. Let the people themselves, the people as a whole, do the deciding as to whether an international dispute shall be settled by the same kind of machine that settles domestic disputes, or by the criminal, devastating, stupid machinery of war. An international agreement on *that* basis can be made sound and effective. And on no other basis.

To trust for peace to any international agreement on any other basis is folly, criminal folly. Until the question of war or no war is decided by the peoples themselves there is only one thing to do—be prepared.

IT IS estimated that the soldier bonus as planned will cost the country one hundred and twenty-five billion dollars. $125,000,000,000. That is too heavy a mortgage on our future. And it has not been deserved or earned.

Spend our money freely for those maimed or bereaved by the great war, yes, by all means, and do not stint the measure of our giving. I can even see that it would be a gracious and probably commendable act, though not at all an obligation, to give a bonus to those who volunteered. But why in Heaven's name should any bonus be paid to those who were drafted—who served their country only when they were compelled to? Have we so completely drifted away from an understanding of democracy as to forget that war-service is merely part of a man's *obligation* as a citizen of a democracy? Merely his bounden duty? Why should a citizen who has merely met his obligation, and met it only because he was forced to meet it, be rewarded as if he had done something particularly meritorious?

Aside from the most generous care for those maimed in the performance of their duty and for those bereaved, the bonus is not a patriotic issue, but only a political one. It would not be an issue at all except that politicians have seized on it as an opportunity for getting votes.—A. S. H.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

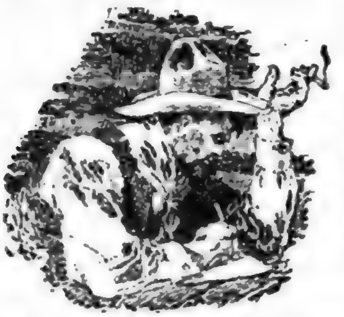
Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the first and third issues of each month. Full list in first issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESENBERG, 3633 New Hampshire Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage ten cents.*)

7. South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., P. O. Box 308, San Francisco, Calif. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce; pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

8. ★ Australia and Tasmania
FRANK MORTON, care *Triad* magazine, 19 Castlereagh St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage ten cents.*)

9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Postage ten cents.*)

11. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4., Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 714 Marquette Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with ten cents in stamps NOT attached*)

13. Japan

Grace P. T. Knudson, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo

Captain Beverley Giddings, Morgan City, La. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan

Gordon MacCreagh, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters

Captain C. L. Oliver, P. O. Box 2882, Tampa, Florida. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan

George W. Twomey, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria

Robert Simpson, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

19. ✠ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo

Charles Beadle, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. *(Postage 12 cents.)*

20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand

Captain F. J. Franklin, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

21. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East

R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. *(Postage 3 cents.)*

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George E. Holt, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli

Captain Beverley Giddings, Morgan City, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

25. Africa Part 8 Sudan

W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs, Khartoum, Sudan, Egypt. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. *(Postage 5 cents.)*

26. Turkey and Asia Minor

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

27. Bulgaria, Roumania

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

28. Albania

Robert S. Townsend, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

29. Jugo-Slavia and Greece

Lieut. William Jenna, Plattsburg Barracks, N. Y. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

30. Scandinavia

Robert S. Townsend, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, language, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland

Fred F. Fleischer, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

32. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile

Edgar Young, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

33. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil

William R. Barbour, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

34. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

William R. Barbour, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information.

35. Central America

Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

36. Mexico Part 1 Northern

J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

37. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California

C. R. Mahaffey, So. Pac. Extra Gang 21, S. P. Depot, San Francisco, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

38. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec

S. E. Sangster ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. *(Postage 3 cents.)*

39. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario

Harry M. Moore, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. *(Postage 3 cents.)*

40. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario

George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. *(Postage 3 cents.)*

41. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District

T. F. Phillips, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

42. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta

Ed. L. Carson, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

43. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin

Reece H. Hague, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. *(Postage 3 cents.)*

44. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec

Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. *(Postage 3 cents.)*

45. Alaska

Theodore S. Solomons, 1436 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

46. Baffinland and Greenland

Victor Shaw, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

47. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

48. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

49. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

Frank Middleton, 705 So. 1st St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

50. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains

Chester C. Davis, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

51. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country

Otto M. Jones, Warden, Bureau of Fish and Game, Boise, Idaho. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

✠ *(Enclose addressed envelop with three cents in stamps—in Mr. Beadle's case twelve cents—NOT attached)*

52. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

53. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

54. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

57. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

58. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
HOWARD A. SHANNON, 631 East Fifth Street, Chattanooga, Tenn. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

59. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
HOWARD A. SHANNON, 631 East Fifth Street, Chattanooga, Tenn. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsmen*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsmen*, 275 Newbury St., Boston Mass. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

MAJOR W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., General Airways System, Inc., Duryea Bldg., Connecticut Ave. at L. St., Washington, D. C. Airplanes: airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, 464 Park Avenue, West New York, N. J. *United States:* Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command.

I.—STANDING INFORMATION

For Camp-Fire Stations write J. Cox, care *Adventure*.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

A Physician's Chances in South Africa

THEY'RE best for young men:

Question:—"In taking advantage of the 'Ask Adventure' department I have no desire to overstep the bounds of reason; therefore should the information I am seeking be of a more business nature than you are expected to furnish please do not hesitate to say so, and I assure you that I will still be as strong for *Adventure* as ever.

Now, captain, before proceeding further permit me to give you a very brief statement of my position. After reading this, if you are the sort I have always imagined the men to be who have charge of the various branches of 'Ask Adventure' I feel quite certain that even though you do not feel justified in furnishing me the desired information, you will at least pardon my presumption in addressing this inquiry to you.

In 1917 (December) when flags were flying, drums beating and the profiteers getting ready for the harvest, my State, usually one of the first in all things, was wofully behind in furnishing her quota of medicos to the Army. I had resigned a commission in the Regular Army Medical Reserve Corps just prior to our entrance into the fight and after serving a year on the border. Like a lot of chaps I got the wrong impression of my own importance and value and although not in the draft age at the time and having a wife, five children and dependent mother to take care of, decided that if we were going to win the war it was time for me to get busy, so wired Washington to please take me back into the Army. Washington as you know was not responsible for many things that happened about that time and wired back to pack my little grip-sack and travel.

Before doing all this I met with the doctors in my home town, and we had quite a gab-fest about patriotism, etc., etc., *ad infinitum;* and the fact that I had not only had three years in the National Guard, one year correspondence course for field officers of the Army, and one year actual service with regular troops made it easy for my brethren of the scalpel to tickle my Irish to the point of overcoming my Scotch caution, and had me r'aring to go.

EDITORIAL NOTE—Upon his return from a year's service, ten months of which were spent abroad, the inquirer found himself in debt and his practise vanished.

He continues:

My health began to fail, and in August, 1919, I simply had to admit that the best thing I could do was to clean up my debts the best I could, make an effort to recover my health and go lick my wounds for a time until something turned up. You may have some idea of what I was up against with eight people to feed and clothe and all the other expenses that go with keeping a family of this size?

Well, I sold out clean and accepted a position in Arizona with the Indian Service at starvation wages; but the allowances of quarters, light, heat, etc., made it possible for me to get by at the same time I was recovering my health. After a year near Tucson, Ariz., I accepted a position on the staff of a tubercular hospital under the United States Public Health Service; but four months soon convinced me that this was no place for me; and when the chief medical examiner informed me that my lungs were O.K. and that so far as they were concerned, with a little common sense and judgment I could live anywhere, I returned to the Indian Service at a good increase in my salary. In less than six months I was transferred to another agency to take charge of the hospital and school work there during an epidemic of typhus fever.

After fifteen months in charge of a forty-bed hospital for Indians, and having complete charge of all medical work, sanitation, etc., of a boarding-school of 217 Indian boys and girls of all ages—both school and hospital being many miles out in the desert and I the only medico on the job after the chief supervisor and the United States Public Health Service officer sent there during the typhus were withdrawn—I asked for transfer and was transferred to another station, in order that my children might have the benefits of the public schools of the town. The salary here is sufficient to permit me to live. Having been my own boss from the time of graduation until I entered the Army, it goes a little hard for me to take orders from some one else, but worst of all is the fact that to remain in this service is to give up all hopes of ever getting on my feet. I am too old to borrow money to start in to build up a private practise in a country town, and to borrow sufficient money to undertake to break into the game in a large city and keep my family for the length of time necessary to establish myself in a satisfactory practise would place me so deeply in debt that there would be little hope of getting out in my lifteime, while my business is one that can not be passed on to my children or even turned over to my creditors.

This is the worst of a profession: One may establish himself ever so solidly; still when he dies his family may not continue the business; for even should my two boys study medicine there is no assurance that they could take up my practise where I left off and continue the business, and the business is not one upon which bankers or others may lend money for extension.

Pardon this personal note in my letter; but, knowing that my letter is an unusual one throughout, I thought that perhaps to talk the whole thing over with you might at least relieve your mind of the thought that you had received a letter from a crank, nut, hop-head or other irresponsible.

In making inquiry about the part of Africa covered by you, I wish to know about the chances for a man in my position, who is willing to stake everything on the throw, who is prepared to leave his family safely located in the States and play the game alone, at least until he is in position to judge intelligently regarding the matter of bringing his family to the place he has chosen to make his last stand.

Before entering medical college I graduated from a large Catholic school and received a thorough training along a commercial line—except stenography—had some training in surveying, common law, etc., worked as first assistant bookkeeper in the largest cotton firm in Vicksburg, Miss., and have worked at other things, such as street-car motorman and conductor, timekeeper for Stone & Webster—I should say as one of the field men and also on the sheets in the office—and several other jobs, so you see I am not afraid to tackle anything.

It was my idea to use my profession merely as bread-winner, depending upon something else to put me on my feet, provided I could find a place where Opportunity was not spelled with great big Dollar Marks. It is possible for me to use my friends to some extent if the proper time comes—thank Heavens when Old Man Hard Luck overtook me and my friends offered me the loan of money I refused and made the best of what I had! Since then several have come to me with offers, but I have never found what I thought to be the chance I was looking for.

Now from your knowledge of that part of Africa where you lived, do you think that the right kind of a man might take a small amount of money, purchase some sort of a ranch and by using his profession to earn his bread win out on the ranch deal? Could or would you give me some idea of about how much money it would require for a man to establish himself on a ranch that would make some money—I do not mean to get rich overnight—that could be improved, etc., so that when he did cash in his checks his family would have something better than life insurance to fall back on? How long would you say it would require to make a ranch out there a paying proposition?

I was raised on a plantation in the Mississippi Delta. My father had twenty-odd families on the plantation and seventy-five negroes in the quarters, so that I am not entirely ignorant of farming, only I have done no farming with my own hands; we always used mules and negroes.

If you have not lost your patience before this and thrown this letter in the waste-basket, please don't; I will soon close and give you a rest.

If you have ever been right up against it for the first time in your life, knew what you wanted but did not know how to go about getting it, you might have some idea of my feelings at present.

Land in this country is held at such a price that a man with a little money can do nothing. Homesteading is a joke. I have written a number of land offices and even bought maps of "open land" and gone through all the motions of homesteading except putting up the money. But when you stop to consider all things you will find that it is cheaper and more satisfactory in the end to buy the land outright. In Arizona I found some excellent places; but when I looked around for the place to put down my well to water my stock, there wasn't any. A well out there will cost you anywhere from $600 to $2,500 and I would rather put that in an oil-well in Oklahoma. Another drawback to homesteading for me in the States is this: If I find land anywhere near a little town or in a community that has a settler every one hundred miles or so, there are forty pill-pedlers hanging around for some one to get bitten by a rattler; and as I do not figure on my ranch bringing in money from the start I must find a place where doctors are not so plentiful, yet where there are people who might need one once or twice a year.

Captain, please pardon my apparent flippancy in this letter. It really is a serious proposition with me. I must make some effort to get back to where I was financially before the war. I am not writing you in the spirit of idle curiosity or attempting to pull any cheap wit. I have written as I have for the reason that I am firmly convinced that men of your caliber are able to see through and beyond such things.

There is no use weeping over my fix, so I don't weep, neither am I squealing; I am simply asking you as one man to another to give me any information about Africa that you think might be useful to me. I will appreciate the books or pamphlets, etc., about fruit-growing, etc., or any other pamphlets that you may send.

If you know of any other places where you think a man might make a go of it, won't you please mention them?

Now I sincerely hope that you do not misjudge me from this letter, and I assure you that I will appreciate anything that you may say about the country; and rest assured that I do not expect you to "tell me where and how to get rich."

If you could give me the names of any firms employing physicians or tell me of any medical contracts that might be obtained in Africa I would appreciate it very much."

Answer, by Capt. Franklin:—I have read your letter several times most carefully, and feel it is my duty to answer it in the spirit in which it was written. I must say I admire its frankness, and do not think you have used a word too much.

We will pass over the first part of the letter and get right down to the essentials, as I feel it is up to me to endeavor to post you as regards the African situation.

In the first place, doctor, Africa is a young man's country. Scores of young English medicos set out for South Africa as soon as they have passed their "final." Some become medical officers on the mines, some on the railways, some settle in country districts; in fact South Africa seems to be overflowing with doctors. The Boers and Africanders too, who are noted for their large families, generally endeavor to place at least one son in a profession, which is generally that of a doctor or a lawyer. Holland also sends a great many of its young men who are medical graduates to South Africa.

The employment situation is not at all healthy in Africa at present, as enclosed leaflet will show. A knowledge of the Dutch language and a smattering of native language are almost essential also in the Africa of today.

I am enclosing booklets on sugar-growing, tobacco and cotton growing, viticulture, poultry-farming, maize-growing; also one of my pamphlets dealing with the Union of South Africa as a field for small capital.

I think I understand your letter thoroughly, and to sum up I would say most emphatically, "*Don't go.*" There is an old saying in South Africa that if you have worn *veldt schoons* (Boer shoes), drunk Cape smoke (brandy), and had an *oopsitting* with a *mooi maisie* (sitting in candle-light with a Boer girl until the candle burns out; then you must beat it)—if you have done these things once, you will always return to Africa. I have returned four times. Now, doctor, you are too old to acquire the "dop" habit (dop is Cape smoke) and an *oopsitting* I am sure would not appeal to you, and *veldt schoons* would hurt your feet; but were you a young medico just starting out in your position, I would say, "By all means go!"

Now a word as to farming and fruit-growing. The capital required these days is far too great; and the natural risks of the country such as floods, *veldt* fires, locusts and drought make it a precarious proposition unless you have unlimited capital.

The full statement of the sections in this department, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Seventy Below, Maybe

IT GETS right cold in northern Canada:

Question:—"I would like you to give me the following information if possible relative to climatical conditions around Hudson Bay country:

Just how cold does it get during the Winter months at Moose Factory or Ft. Albany in northern Ottawa? And what has been the lowest ever recorded at these places? Likewise at Rupert House or Ft. Chimo, in northern Quebec?"—C. K. SMITH, Jacksonville, Fla.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Usually it drops as low as 60 below zero at Moose Factory and other James Bay points; average would run 30 to 40 below. Don't know the lowest recorded, but a good guess would be 65 or 70 degrees below; Fort Chimo possibly some lower.

The air is dry at this temperature and one does not feel the cold, but must watch his feet, hands and face to prevent freezing.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Game and Fresh-Water Fishing of Florida

PLENTY of sport for the man who's willing to go after it:

Question:—"I would like to know what you can say about Lake County, Florida, as compared with any other parts of the State as a good place for hunting and fishing.

I am enclosing return envelop, with stamp, for reply."—T. D. RUSSELL, Cleveland, O.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—For fresh-water fishing the lakes of Lake County, Florida, can hardly be beaten. The fish are big-mouthed bass, pickerel, speckled perch, bream, cat and mudfish. The bass predominate largely, and get to weigh up to sixteen pounds. The pickerel get up to around six pounds. Speckled perch (called also goggle-eye, crappie and calico perch) is a very nice fish, but it rarely grows to more than two pounds.

The bream is a small, flat fish, and not sporty. The cat gets as big as a man, but is not very delicate. The mudfish (known also as grinnell or grindle, dog-fish and mud pike) is unfit to eat, but gets to be very large and sometimes puts up a terrific fight.

The best way of fishing these lakes, in my opinion, is with short casting-rod, eighty-yard reel, twenty-pound test black braided silk line, and either Heddon's or South Bend wooden baits, "zaragosa" and "bassoreno" types. I prefer light colors—yellows and rainbows. A favorite way of fishing also is with a steel fly-rod and small white spoon with pork-rind, but this gets smaller fish ordinarily than the wooden baits.

As for hunting, it is fair in Lake County. There such game as rabbit, squirrel, quail, Wilson snipe, etc., are found almost anywhere. Duck may be found on the lakes, more or less. Back in the eastern part of the county, in a wilderness called the "Big Scrub," there are more or less of deer, bear and turkey; this, by the way, is hard hunting, and a guide is always necessary.

But much better hunting is to be had down in Lee County, southeast of Fort Myers. That is a great, wild country down there. Peter Schutt, manager of Hotel Bradford, Fort Myers, will tell you anything you may want to know about that hunting; write him if you contemplate the trip. It is hard and expensive, and there is more or less of danger connected with it—sort of hunting, I might say, for "none but the brave;" but you'll certainly find something to shoot. As well as deer and turkey and bear, there are panther, bobcat, and big diamond-back rattlers in that section.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Mayan Monuments

LIKE the ancient Egyptians, the extinct Maya race left its history carved in stone, and archeologists are now finding it possible to unravel the meaning of the hieroglyphics:

Question:—"Will you kindly give me some information about the ruins of monuments built by the Maya race?

Have the present natives any legends bearing on the Maya race?"—CORNELIA A. RUSS, Los Gatos, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Emerson:—Year after year archeological expeditions sent out by American scientific institutions are penetrating deeper and deeper into the virgin fastnesses and are discovering new finds of ruined cities, and from the monuments and hieroglyphic inscriptions they are gradually reconstructing the outlines of ancient Maya history which has been for so many years buried in the vast tropical forests of northern Central America, and more especially in the State of Guatemala. Thus these splendid memorials of a forgotten people are slowly coming to light; and the way it was done was by offering a reward to the *chicleros* (men who gather the sap or gum from the tree called *chicosapote*) for bringing any news about finding any rocks or slabs with any letters or figures upon them. This plan has led to the discovery of several valuable localities, or "locations," which are now being cleared of the forest and dirt above them.

The ruins of Izlu were discovered on April 10th, 1921, by Carnegie Central American Expedition.

A beautiful example of Maya stone-carving was found tightly clasped in the roots of a large breadnut-tree which was growing on top of it. When this tree was felled and the altar beneath was turned face upward for the first time in more than one thousand years, it was found to have six columns of hieroglyphs sculptured on its top and in an almost perfect state of preservation. The translation of these marks so far has shown it to be work of the Maya era (A. D. 620.)

If you will look up a copy of the *National Geographic Magazine* of February, 1922, you will see some fine illustrations of finds from these buried cities of ancient peoples.

Many ruined cities of prehistoric civilizations which flourished in Central America are to be preserved as reservations and national parks. This action will preserve for all time some fifty cities, temples, pyramids and other monuments of the Maya race.

"Gateway to the Sahara"

TRIPOLI receives the title quoted above because it is headquarters for the caravan trade through the desert:

Question:—"Will you please send me some information on exploring and caravan trade in Tripoli."—L. L. BENNETT, Lawrenceville, Ill.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—Tripoli is now under Italian rule and is called the "Gateway to the Sahara," and the caravan trade to and from the city through the desert is enormous. All goods are transported by baggage-camels, called in Tripoli *jemals*. Ivory, ostrich feathers, gum arabic, cloth from the Kano dye-pits, rhino horns, leather, etc., are brought in in great quantities from various parts of central Africa.

The Sahara is peopled by several very fierce tribes called Tuaregs, who levy upon the caravans enormous taxes as tribute for safe conduct of the caravans through the desert. Nor does this always suffice; more times than are pleasant the caravans are raided, the personnel killed or captured, and all goods and animals taken.

The principal caravan routes are:

Tripoli City to Sokoto and Kano *via* Ghadames and Ghat.

Tripoli City to the Sudan *via* Murzuk.

Tripoli City to the Sudan *via* Socna and Murzuk.

As to exploration, a good part of the Sahara awaits some wealthy adventurer.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

"Q" Ships

BOOKS that tell the story of the British merchant marine and its part in the World War:

Question:—"I would be very grateful for any information you might give me regarding the following:

Name and author of book or books covering the adventures of the British merchant marine during the World War.

Has there ever been a book published about the ocean steamship of today, giving the names and other data of the vessels operated by the various steamship lines?

To what line do the following class of steamships belong: *Tresithney, Tremere, Tredenham?*

Their home port, I think, is Saint Ives. Many of them are operated in the New York-Australian service by Norton, Lilly & Company."—GEORGE W. WALRATH, New York.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—The books covering your requirements concerning the activities of British merchant ships during the late war are "A Merchant Fleet at War," published by Cassell's, London, and "'Q'-Ships and Their Story," by E. Keble Chatterton, published by Sidgwick & Jackson, 3 Adam St., Adelphi, London, W. C. 2. I do not recall the name of the author of "A Merchant Fleet at War." Nor the price. The cost of the "Q"-ship book is 12/6 net in London.

I know of no work that covers your second query.

The ships you name belong to the Hain S.S. Company, St. Ives. E. Hain & Son are managers. There are many ships in this concern from 1,000 to 3,000 tons. All the names begin with *Tre*.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Crystal Sets vs. Tube Sets

DON'T apologize for the typewritten signature, doctor; if you could see some of the pitiful scrawls our "A. A." men have to decipher, you'd know your typing is a service, not a discourtesy:

Question:—"The question I am asking you is one I have put to three teachers of radio engineering, and they never answered. Probably thought it wasn't worth while. However, every time I have asked an *Adventure* man about anything I have always received some sort of a reply.

In re crystal detector sets: Experts have stated that when the owner of a crystal set receives phone or C. W. from distances over, say, twenty-five miles, he is probably only getting the re-radiations from near-by tube sets, powerful ones. They have all seemed to emphasize the words near-by sets.

Now just what do you think they mean by the term 'near-by'? I operate a crystal set in addition to my tube set, and get stations three or four hundred miles away regularly. Of course there are some tube sets in town, the closest one being, say, 3000 feet from my aerial. So the re-radiation story is not so hard to swallow.

BUT! On a farm near here, there is a young man who has been getting WGY at Schenectady on a crystal, and there is no aerial inside of six miles. What is the answer?

Of course I do not say that the theory is impossible, but I reason like this: These waves are *there*, and there is no basic reason why they can not be heard on a crystal, as the crystal can not help but pick them up, leaving the question of audibility the only one to be considered.

Now—theory or no theory—I can remember, and I am just thirty-three, too, the time when science claimed that it was an impossibility to receive messages through the air without any wires. Can't you? What dope have you on the question?

My tube set is very efficient. I use three QSA inductances with one Radiotron UV-200, and hear from coast to coast. Heard the transoceanic broadcast of WOR last Friday night. Heard it darn well, too.

One more: What is your opinion of potentiometer control of B batteries? Some say yes, and some no.

Where is the instrument wired, if used?"—Dr. Herbert J. Day, Harrisburg, So. Dak.

Pardon typed signature, but I wanted to be sure you had a good *legible* address of mine in case the envelop I am enclosing should get lost.

Answer, by Mr. McNicol:—Your question is quite proper, and the subject is one on which there is no little misunderstanding.

Tube sets, of course, have obvious advantages over crystal sets—such as continuity of reception, adaptability for amplifying attachments, hook-ups making close tuning possible, etc.; but for clearness of reproduction from stations within range, and for comparatively long-distance reception when a proper antenna is used, the crystal receiver needs no apologies.

No man is an expert in radio when he says that, when radio signals are received with a crystal set from distances beyond twenty-five miles, these are reflected, repeated, or relayed as a result of reradiation from neighboring tube sets, or antennas connected to tube sets.

To be sure, this phenomenon is well known, and there are instances where this very thing takes place; but re-radiated signals may be picked up by tube sets as well as crystal sets.

Before the tube sets were used at all crystal sets were receiving signals over distances of two thousand miles. In fact, it is only within the past few years that tube sets have replaced crystal sets on ships at sea. At sea very long distances have been covered by both silicon and galena sets without battery, and with carborundum sets with battery.

As you say, "The signals are *there*;" and being *there*, they will be detected if the receiver, whether tube or crystal, is sensitive enough.

A 100-foot-long, outdoor antenna, 50 feet or more high, connected to a crystal detector, with proper hook-up, is a good outfit.

LOST TRAILS

Note—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

HANEY, LILLIAN and JACK. Your old friend would like to hear from you.—Address Ad Buffington, 211-6 East St., Salt Lake City, Utah.

TRASK, WILLARD. I want very much to get those MSS. in bottom of your trunk. Letters in care Cornell College will always reach me. Other C. Z. H. S. and Army friends please write.—Address David F. Ash, Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa.

BAGBY, OLIVER HALBERT. Last seen in Houston, March, 1919. Age thirty years, dark-complexioned, height five feet six inches. Received A. B. degree at Richmond College, Virginia—now University of Richmond. At time of disappearance he was taking his M. D. degree at Medical College of Galveston. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address Helen Bagby, Caixa 572, Sao Paulo, Brazil, S. A.

MACK, JOSEPH F. We are all well. Mother has been ailing. She worries much about you. Why don't you come back to us? We are very anxious about you. Let us know if you read this and understand.—Address yours loving sisters and pal. Helen and Lois.

RENNER, WALTER J. Lately "Second-Story Renner Tailor" of Mansfield, Ohio. Important news. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Ogden B. Wolfe, Apt. H, 1508 North La Salle St., Chicago, Ill.

WHITMORE, I. W. Age about sixty-five years. Homesteaded with my brother and myself in Spirit River country, Alberta, in 1917-1918. Relatives in Iowa and Missouri. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Edward G. Carlson, care of *Adventure*.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

AVELERSON, CHARLES HENRY. Left Newark, N. J., 1906, for Los Angeles, then went to Sonora, Mexico. Height five feet eleven and one-half inches, brown hair and eyes. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address G. E. Avelerson, 24 Miller Ave., Toronto, Ont., Canada.

WOULD like to hear from some of the old-timers that have hit the trails up the Republican River or the Platte or old Missouri Rivers, up Fort Bent. Can you tell us anything about old Roman Nose, or old Red Cloud?—Address J. W. Brewer, Central School Bldg., Hannibal, Mo.

HERBERT, FRANK. Mother is in distress and needs her only son. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Frank Dinger, 818 Western Ave., Seattle, Wash.

ANSELL, EDWARD CLARENCE T. (Rex). Age forty-four, five feet seven inches, hazel eyes, hair slightly gray, slight build. Supposed to have come to New York from England about Oct., 1920. Any information will be appreciated by his wife who has good news.—Address Mrs. Queenie Ansell, care of *Adventure*.

VERNEY, JOE. Joined the Army about ten years ago and was stationed with the cavalry in Texas. Was a resident of Paterson, N. J. Any information will be appreciated by his comrades.—Address Charles S. Gall, 111 Buffalo Ave., Paterson, N. J.

SPINKS, JOHN L. Last heard of in Green River, Wyoming, four and a half years ago. Age twenty-four, height five feet nine inches, light hair, high forehead, eyes a little crossed, color blue. Any information will be appreciated.—Address W. E. Spinks, Route 4, Meridian, Miss.

COURTLAND, GOODWIN. Please write your old buddy. Or any other buddy who served in Co. A, 8th Inf. in Coblenz who knows me write me a line also.—Address H. J. GRAY, 33 Lindel St., Haverhill, Mass.

SCOTT, R. E. or ESTILL. Formerly of Riverside or Montcalm, West Virginia. Attended West Point Military Academy about 1903. Later in Air Service, U. S. A. Your old schoolmate and friend would be pleased to hear from you.—Address JOS. C. FINCH, Box 1612, El Dorado, Ark.

SNOWDEN, E. Please write home immediately. Matters straightened out here. Very worried. Your wife.

SEMPLE, JAMES LITHGOW. Last heard from in Chicago, Ill. Any information will be appreciated.—Address A. C. S. care of *Adventure.*

BEYER, LOUIS. Last heard from in February 28th, 1921, at that time he was in the theatrical business known on the stage as LEW WALTERS. Was member of the Woodmen of America, Knights of Pythias, The Moose and the Elks. Any information will be appreciated.—Address H. H. BEYER, 150 Hale Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

SMYTHE, ARNOLD. Last heard of in Caspar, Wyoming. Have news. Write.—Address ROBERT MASON, 705 Walbridge Ave., Toledo, Ohio.

WILLETTS, GILSON, 730 M. Write me. Have news.—Address "C. S."

KANE, THOMAS C. Formerly on U. S. S. *Edsall* in Turkey, probably discharged. Any information will be appreciated.—Address E. H. MARSHALL, Gen. Del. Watertown, N. Y.

ASHTON, GEORGE H. Resident of Buffalo, N. Y. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. A. JANETTY, Stowe and Naugatuck Aves., Milford, Conn.

THE following have been inquired for in either the October 10th or October 20th issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

BAILEY, ROBERT W.; Christian, Olive; Corp. Norman L. Simpson; Davis, Andrew Lester; Devere, Raymond; Duckworth, John; Estes, L. B.; Gardner, Charles H.; Gwilliam, John Lodge; Hankins, O. D.; Hart, Allan J.; Jackson, Jack H.; Johnston, Robert Gordon; Johnson, Dercy and William; Kirsch, Michael; Lantis, Wesley; Manning, Wilard; Mauck, Joseph B.; May, C. B.; Mitchell, Bob; Navarro, Nedra; Prichard, "Zark" or Walter; Price, James; Rahilly, Richard H.; Reed, Tiffin; Riley, Charley; Roberts, George L.; Sciarra, Ben F;. Shepard, Harold North; Steel, William; Thompson, Charles; Ubil, George Durbro.

MISCELLANEOUS—"Monte" or Hassayampa.

UNCLAIMED MAIL.

DONOVAN, ANNA LYLE; Grahame, Arthur W.; Moore, Robert; Seville, Mrs. A. L.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

NOVEMBER 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **four complete novelettes** mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

MOUNTAIN PRIDE — ***Lewis H. Kilpatrick***

It deals out justice in the mountain way.

TALE OF A HAMMER — ***H. C. Bailey***

An ironmaster sets out to end the feud between two proud nobles.

THE THIRD POSSE — ***Christopher Hawthorne***

A bank robbery, an escape and a broken-down Ford.

SEA-COOKS AND SEALS — ***Frederick Moore***

A weird sight meets *Captain Coddles'* gaze after he had drunk that Chinese home-brew.

STANDISH OF THE STAR Y A Five-Part Story Part II — ***Gordon Young***

He learns something of *Black Renalds'* methods.

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Hugh Pendexter, Leonard H. Nason, Talbot Mundy, Barry Scobee, W. Townend, Frederick Moore, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Charles Victor Fischer, Sidney Herschel Small, J. D. Newsom and Conroy Kroder, and short stories by E. S. Pladwell, W. C. Tuttle, Bill Adams, George E. Holt, John Webb, William Byron Mowery and many others—tales of the seas of the world, the West, Arabia, Japan, the Indians, the Great War, Morocco, Labrador, India, our own country and many others.

Gray Closed Cars in the first year of their production have merited and received the public's favor to an unusual degree. The Gray is not "just another car" but it has distinctive features which instantly appeal to your ideas of comfort and economy. That the Gray holds the world's official economy record is just one of these reasons. Will you investigate the others?

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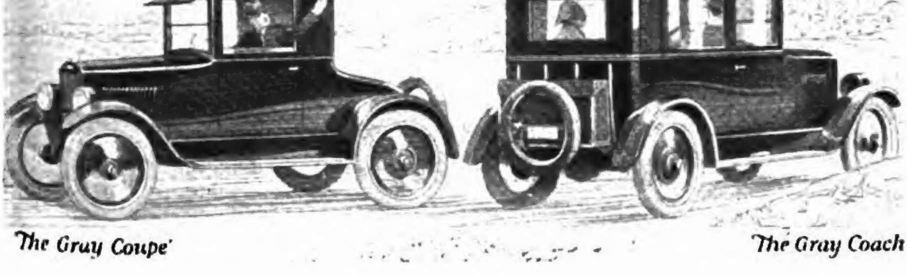

The Gray Coupe *The Gray Coach*

Black Jac

Chewing Gum

ADAMS
Black Jack
CHEWING GUM
"Good old licorice flavor!"

NOVEMBER
20th
1923
25c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

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John Webb
H. Bedford Jones
Robert Simpson
Leonard H. Nason
Thomas McMorrow
J. D. Newsom
Ramsey Benson
Bill Adams
Ralph R. Guthrie
Ernest Douglas
W. Townend

4 Complete Novelettes